CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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Railways announces passenger fare hike from Dec 26

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Railways has announced a revision in train fares, effective December 26, aimed at generating an estimated Rs 600 crore in additional revenue for the current financial year. This marks the second fare increase in 2025, following the first rationalisation implemented on July 1, which generated Rs 700 crore.

Under the new fare structure, ordinary class passengers traveling beyond 215 km will incur an additional charge of 1 paisa per km. Non-AC mail and express classes will see a rise of 2 paise per km, with AC classes also facing a 2-paise-per-km increase. For a 500 km non-AC journey, this translates to an extra Rs 10. Suburban trains and Monthly Season Tickets (MSTs) remain unaffected by the hike.

Railway officials explained that rising manpower costs, which reached Rs 1,15,000 crore in 2024–25, along with pension expenses of Rs 60,000 crore and a total operational cost of Rs 2,63,000 crore, necessitate modest fare adjustments. They emphasized that fare rationalisation is part of a broader strategy, including higher cargo loading, to enhance efficiency while meeting social obligations.

The Railways highlighted its expanded network and improved operational performance, including mobilising over 12,000 trains during the festival season. Officials stressed that the fare hike balances operational sustainability with affordability, ensuring the continued safety and quality of passenger services.

FARE CHANGES

Class / Distance	Fare Revision	Example (500 km)
Ordinary Class (≤215 km)	No change	0
Ordinary Class (>215 km)	+1 paisa per km	5
Ordinary Class (>215 km)	+1 paisa per km	5
Non-AC Mail/Express	+2 paise per km	10
AC Classes	+2 paise per km	10

VB-G RAM G Bill gets Prez Murmu's assent

President Murmu approves VB-G RAM G Act, replacing MGNREGA, raising job guarantee to 125 days, tightening payments, linking employment with asset creation

NEW DELHI

The new law replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, and increases the statutory guarantee of wage employment for rural households from 100 days to 125 days in a financial year. The overhaul is aimed at strengthening livelihood security while aligning rural employment with the Centre's long-term vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

President Droupadi Murmu has accorded assent to the Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act, 2025, bringing in a comprehensive restructuring of India's rural employment system, the Ministry of Rural Development announced on Sunday.

The new law guarantees rural households with adult members willing to undertake unskilled manual work at least 125 days of wage employment each year. The Act also enforces stricter timelines for wage disbursal. Payments must be made weekly or within 15 days of the completion of work, and compensation for delayed payments has been made compulsory.

A significant change under the revised framework is the closer alignment of employment generation with the creation of durable rural assets. Projects will prioritise water conservation, essential rural infrastructure, livelihood-support facilities and initiatives to mitigate the impact of extreme weather. All assets created will be geo-mapped and linked to a national rural infrastructure platform to enhance coordination and prevent duplication.

While planning and execution will remain decentralised through Gram Panchayat plans approved by Gram Sabhas, these plans will be digitally connected to national platforms to improve inter-departmental convergence without diluting local autonomy.

Implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, the Act follows a 60:40 Centre–state funding pattern, with higher central support for northeastern and Himalayan states. The government said the legislation strengthens accountability, restores unemployment allowance provisions, enhances transparency through technology, and positions rural employment as a key driver of income security and long-term rural resilience.

'Confusion over leadership is local, not in high command'

KALABURAGI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said Karnataka leadership confusion exists only locally, not with high command, urging leaders to acknowledge collective party efforts.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday clarified that the confusion over the leadership issue in the party's Karnataka unit exists only at the local level and not within the party high command.

Speaking to reporters here, Kharge said, "The high command hasn't created any confusion. It exists at the local level." "How is it right to put the blame on the high command?" he asked.

Kharge further said the local leaders should take ownership of the internal disputes rather than blaming the high command. The Congress veteran also cautioned against claiming credit for the party's electoral success.

"Everyone has built the party. It's not any individual's effort. Congress has been built by party workers. Congress workers supported us," he said without naming anyone.

The opposition leader in the Rajya Sabha urged party workers to stop boasting about personal contributions and recognise the collective effort of the cadre.

The statement came amid the ongoing power tussle in Karnataka between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar.

The Chief Minister had on Friday expressed confidence that the party leadership supported him to complete his full five-year term. Asked about Shivakumar heading to Delhi to meet the Party high command, Mallikarjun Kharge said, "I don't have information on the matter."

Cong settled illegal B'deshi migrants for vote-bank: PM

GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday sharply criticised the Congress for allegedly settling illegal Bangladeshi migrants in Assam to consolidate its vote bank, asserting that the BJP-led "double-engine government" was correcting decades of policy neglect in the state. Speaking after laying the foundation stone for a Rs 10,601 crore brownfield ammonia-urea fertiliser plant in Dibrugarh, Modi accused the Congress of promoting an anti-India agenda and ignoring the identity and aspirations of the Assamese people.

"The Congress has no concern for Assam's identity. They are interested only in power," he said, adding that the party preferred illegal migrants to strengthen its electoral base, even at the cost of Assam's welfare. Modi warned that the state must be protected from the "poison" of appeasement and vote-bank politics, assuring citizens that the BJP would safeguard Assam's honour and identity.

"The Congress has no concern for the identity of Assam and its people. They are interested only in power and doing things they did before."
—Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Modi also highlighted the BJP government's developmental achievements in Assam, contrasting them with Congress' past neglect.

He noted that previous governments ignored industrial infrastructure, particularly fertiliser units, causing repeated shutdowns that harmed farmers and workers. Under the BJP, urea production nationwide has increased from 225 lakh metric tonnes in 2014 to 306 lakh metric tonnes, while land rights for Assam's tea garden communities have been granted, ensuring dignity and livelihood.

Earlier, Modi paid tribute at Swahid Smarak Kshetra, Guwahati, honoring the martyrs of the Assam Movement.

QUICK READ

Gruhalakshmi funds to be credited this week

BELAGAVI: Karnataka Women and Child Development Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar announced that the 24th installment of the Gruhalakshmi Scheme has been approved, with funds to be credited to beneficiaries' accounts between Monday and Saturday (December 22 to 27). She urged eligible families to ensure their children receive the benefits. On Belagavi district development, Hebbalkar said the Chief Minister aims to bifurcate the district for better administration, citing that a single tahsildar manages over one lakh residents.

BJP-led Mahayuti sweeps M'shtra local polls

MUMBAI: In Maharashtra's local body elections, the BJP has emerged as the single largest party, with Mahayuti allies securing a decisive victory across municipal councils. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis highlighted that 48% of councillors won on the BJP symbol, with 3,300 elected and 129 council presidents from the party. The alliance claimed 75% of municipal leadership positions.

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CM Siddaramaiah launches Polio drive

BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday launched the three-day Pulse Polio Immunisation Drive across Karnataka by administering polio drops to a child at his official residence, Krishna. Marking National Immunisation Day (Pulse Polio) 2025, the Chief Minister appealed to parents to ensure that all children below the age of five receive the vaccine without fail.

He urged families with young children to visit their nearest vaccination centres between December 21 and December 24 and get the mandatory two drops administered. Emphasising the importance of the campaign, Siddaramaiah said the simple act of giving two drops of polio vaccine protects a child's future from lifelong disability and strengthens the national goal of a polio-free India.

The state aims to cover approximately 62.40 lakh children during the campaign. Vaccination will be prioritised at government and private hospitals, anganwadi centres, construction sites, brick kilns, slums, remote habitations, bus stands and railway stations. On Sunday, vaccination is being conducted at designated booths, followed by door-to-door visits over the next two to three days.

Special focus has been placed on migrant and slum children to ensure no child is missed. Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said India has been polio-free for 14 years but vigilance remains essential, as polio cases continue in neighbouring countries.

Key Implementation

33,258 Booths

1,030 Mobile Teams

1,096 Transit Teams

1,13,115+ Vaccinators

7,322 Supervisors

Locate your nearest vaccination centre using the "Nearby Vaccination Centre Karnataka" app.

BANGLADESH UNREST

India suspends visa applications indefinitely in Chittagong

DHAKA

India has indefinitely suspended visa services at the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) in Chattogram, Bangladesh's southeastern port city, amid escalating unrest following the killing of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi. The move comes in the wake of security concerns after attacks linked to the violence targeted Indian diplomatic premises.

According to local media reports, visa operations at the Chattogram IVAC were halted from December 21, 2025, after stone-pelting incidents were reported at the residence of the Assistant High Commissioner of India in the city. In a brief statement, IVAC said the centre would remain closed "until further notice" and that a decision on reopening would be taken after reviewing the prevailing security situation. The unrest erupted after Hadi's death triggered widespread protests and vandalism across several parts of Bangladesh. An IVAC official told PTI that while Chattogram services have been suspended, the other four centres—located in Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi and Sylhet—are currently operational.

India has conveyed "strong concerns" over the attacks on minorities in Bangladesh to the authorites of the neighbouring country, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Sunday. Jaiswal said India has urged Bangladesh that the perpetrators of the barbaric killing of a Hindu man named Dipu Chandra Das be brought to justice.

Earlier, India had temporarily shut its visa centre in Dhaka due to heightened security threats, reopening it a day later. Similar facilities in Rajshahi and Khulna were also briefly closed after anti-India protesters attempted to march towards Indian missions. Security was further tightened at Indian establishments in Sylhet to prevent any exploitation of the volatile situation.

Hadi, 32, was a key figure in last year's student-led protests.

China-made rifle telescope recovered in Jammu

JAMMU

Amid heightened security across Jammu province, the Jammu and Kashmir Police on Sunday recovered a telescopic sight of an assault rifle from the Sidhra area, located close to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) headquarters in Jammu. The recovery was made from overgrown land situated between the NIA office and the Jammu and Kashmir Police's Security Headquarters. According to reports, the device bears Chinese markings and is commonly used as an attachment to assault rifles and sniper weapons, raising serious security concerns.

QUICK READ

Bike rider dies due to pothole

Bengaluru

In a big twist in the case of the death of a bike rider due to a pothole in Nelamangala Traffic Police Station limits, an FIR has come to light against the deceased rider. An FIR has been registered on the complaint of another bike rider, Arvind. This angered the family members of the deceased and instead of registering an FIR against the municipal corporation for not plugging the pothole, they filed an FIR against Tabrez. He said he would not allow a post-mortem to be conducted until justice is served on Tabrez's death.

IAS officer Randeep flags off breast cancer awareness walkathon

Bengaluru

IAS officer KR Randeep,- flagged off the 5th annual Breast Cancer Awareness Walkathon organised by the Trust-in-Hospital at KR Pura Horamavu. Speaking on the occasion, Randeep said that despite today's hectic lifestyle, everyone should take care of their health and take regular walks and exercise. The event was attended by Dr Keshav, Shivayogi, Trust-in-Hospital Manager, Dr Dr KH Basavaraj. Dr Shivakumar and Dr BS Shankar and others were present on the occasion.

FIR filed over AI Deepfake video of President Murmu

The deepfake fever that has been plaguing actors and actresses has now reached President Droupadi Murmu

BENGALURU

An FIR has been registered at the city's Mahalaxmi Layout police station against the person and social media account who made a 'deepfake' video in Murmu's name.

The case was registered on the complaint of social media in-charge PSI Rakesh. Recently, a deepfake video was also leaked in the name of Rajya Sabha member Sudha Murthy regarding investment.

While checking Facebook accounts in the social media department of Mahalakshmi Layout Police on December 5, a video of President Draupadi Murmu addressing the central government's financial scheme was shared on the 'Done Dreams' account.

The video posted on the page also provided a link below, falsely advertising that people can earn more by investing money and sitting at home without working.

When the matter was brought to the notice of the city police commissioner and a preliminary investigation was conducted, it was revealed that the video of the President's speech was deepfaked using AI technology.

A case has been registered against an unknown person and the social media account holder on December 12 under Sections 318(4), 336(4) of the BNS Act 2023 for spreading false information, extorting money from the public and causing financial loss.

It is an old idea to attach someone's head to someone's body using a photo editing tool. When looking at these photos, there is a little suspicion. But in deepfake technology, not a photo, but a video is created so that there is no suspicion. The video is so realistic that it seems to have a direct connection to the person's body and face. Even though the original video is different, it is portrayed as if this person is acting in the video.

Guv urges athletes to bring global glory to state

BENGALURU

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, called upon sportspersons to utilize government support and enhance Karnataka's reputation at the global level through excellence in sports.

He was addressing the gathering at the Karnataka Olympic Association Awards–2025 distribution ceremony, organized by the Karnataka Olympic Association at Lok Bhavan. The Governor said that both the Government of India and the Government of Karnataka are playing a proactive role in strengthening sports activities and ensuring the overall upliftment of sportspersons.

The State Government has framed strong policies to promote sports by identifying talent in both rural and urban areas and providing appropriate platforms. The Karnataka State Sports Authority and the Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports are offering international-standard modern sports facilities to athletes, the Governor stated.

He further noted that the Athletes who win medals at national and international levels are provided incentives, reservations in government jobs and due recognition. As a result, Karnataka is steadily progressing by linking sports with health, discipline and national pride, he said.

Government is creating opportunities for young athletes through scholarships, training programmes and incentive schemes.

Emphasizing grassroots development, the Governor said that identifying and nurturing talent at the grassroots level is essential to improve the country's representation in sports. He stressed the need to encourage regular sports activities and compulsory physical education in schools and colleges, strengthen sports infrastructure in rural areas, ensure availability of trained coaches and expand opportunities for participation in national and international competitions.

Appealing to parents and teachers, the Governor said their encouragement is vital for children to participate in sports. Sports contribute to physical, mental and intellectual development and help build responsible citizens, he said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Home Minister G Parameshwar, MLC and Karnataka Olympic Association President Dr K Govindaraj, Principal Secretary Naveen Raj Singh, Commissioner R Chethan and other dignitaries were present at the event.

Anil Kumble flags off urban wildlife ambulance

BENGALURU

Former cricketer and Karnataka's Forest and Wildlife ambassador Anil Kumble flagged off an ambulance exclusively for urban wildlife. Launched through a partnership between AI-native automotive platform company Tekion and Praana Animal Foundation, the initiative aims to strengthen emergency response for the wildlife amid the city's rapid expansion and rise in human–animal conflict.Samyukta Hornad, founder, Praana Animal Foundation, said, we have set up a 24x7 Helpline to report incidents. Beyond native species, the ambulance is equipped to safely transport ostriches, emus, and exotic birds captured from unauthorized breeding centres in the city to appropriate rehabilitation facilities.

Launched under the 'Tekion for Good' initiative, the project seeks to bridge critical infrastructure gaps in urban wildlife rescue, treatment, and rehabilitation. Aravind Gowda, Senior Director, Tekion, said, this partnership emonstrates how corporates, civil society, and the government can collaborate effectively to ensure timely and compassionate care for the ecosystem we all share." The ambulance will have a trained para-veterinarian on board and is equipped with essential medical and rescue equipment to provide immediate on-site care and ensure safe transportation.

It is also engineered to support the Forest Department in high-risk situations, including the transportation of larger animals such as leopards, gaurs, and sloth bears that stray into residential areas. Srinivasulu, Principal Secretary, Ecology and Environment said, animals rescued through this service will be transferred to Bannerghatta Biological Park or the Birds of Paradise Rehabilitation Center for professional treatment and rehabilitation.

Parents urged to ensure Polio vaccination for children

BENGALURU

Former Zilla Panchayat member Shivamaddayya has urged parents to ensure that all children under the age of five receive the pulse polio vaccine. He emphasized that participating in the vaccination drive is crucial for building a polio-free society. Speaking at the launch of the pulse polio campaign on Sunday at the Government Higher Primary School in Chikkegowdanapalya, Yeshwanthpur constituency, he highlighted the government's efforts to protect children from polio and prevent lifelong disabilities. Parents were urged to cooperate fully and make sure their children receive the vaccine, safeguarding their health and future. The event was attended by the school's headmistress Sudha, Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, and other community members, who encouraged parents to actively participate in the campaign. Such initiatives aim to strengthen public awareness and ensure comprehensive coverage of the vaccination program across the district.

Six years on, Kamaraj Road may reopen fully in Jan 2026

BENGALURU

After over six years, commuters are set to regain full access to Kamaraj Road, between Cubbon Road and Cauvery Emporium junction on MG Road, from the first week of January 2026.

Reopening the stretch for two-way traffic is expected to significantly ease congestion in the Central Business District (CBD). Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) took over the stretch in June 2019 for the construction of MG Road underground station on Namma Metro's Pink Line, and said the road would be restored by 2023. However, the deadline was missed because of delays caused by Covid-19 pandemic, tunnelling works, and other technical challenges.In Feb 2025, BMRCL partially reopened the road, allowing traffic movement on one side — from Cauvery Emporium junction towards Commercial Street, while the remaining portion was retained for station-related construction and movement of heavy machinery.

BMRCL's Chief Public Relations Officer, BL Yeshwanth Chavan, said the entire stretch has now been restored with a white-topped surface following completion of civil works.

Final touches are under way, and the road will be opened after clearance from traffic police, he said, adding around Rs 3 crore was spent on rebuilding it. A senior traffic cop said vehicles on both sides of Kamaraj Road are likely to be allowed from January 2. This will considerably reduce travel time for those coming from Commercial Street, Dickenson Road, and Cubbon Road towards Brigade Road and MG Road, the officer said.The underground station, built using cut-and-cover method, will be integrated with the existing elevated Purple Line station on MG Road. While more than 80 trees were felled during construction, BMRCL is expected to take up beautification of the stretch in collaboration with private firms. The station is slated to open along with other stations on 21km Pink Line by the end of 2026.

'National Herald was born during freedom struggle'

BENGALURU

The National Herald was born during the freedom struggle of this country. Nehru started this newspaper in 1937. This is the property of the Congress party. This is not the property of Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, KPCC President DK Shivakumar said.

If I am the president of the Congress party and I am the president of some organisations, can all the assets of those organisations be my personal property. As long as I am in this post, these institutions will be my responsibility, whoever will succeed me in this post will be responsible for the assets of this institution. Some shares were given in the names of Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Motilal Vohra and Oscar Fernandes. They have filed a PMLA case against me and are harassing me, he said. Then you all prayed for me. Then the case against me was dismissed.

CBI arrests Lieutenant Colonel Sharma

BENGALURU

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested Lieutenant Colonel Deepak Kumar Sharma and Vinod Kumar, officers posted in the Department of Defence Production of the Ministry of Defence, on charges of corruption, officials said.

Deepak Kumar Sharma has been arrested on charges of accepting a bribe of Rs 3 lakh from a Bengaluru-based company. CBI officials, who conducted a search operation at Sharma's Delhi residence on Saturday, said they seized Rs 2.23 crore in cash.

Deepak Kumar Sharma was working as Assistant Project Officer (International Cooperation and Exports) in the Department of Production, Ministry of Defence. His wife, Colonel Kajal Bali, is an officer in the 16th Infantry Regiment in Sriganganagar, Rajasthan. The CBI has registered a case against both of them.

Sharma was accused of accepting bribes to facilitate private company officials in other transactions, including the production and export of defense products. Following this, a case was registered against Sharma and his wife, Colonel Kajal Bali, CBI officials informed.

Bribery through illegal means: The CBI had gathered information about Sharma accepting bribes from a Bengaluru-based company. Sharma was in constant touch with Rajiv Yadav and Ravjit Singh, who were looking after the affairs of this company. Along with them, he used to receive bribes from various government departments and ministries through illegal means.

RESIDENT SAFETY PRIORITY

Police night doorsteps aim to prevent crime, build trust

BENGALURU

Residents of Suddaguntepalya in the city's southeast division are opening their doors to an unusual sight this week, uniformed police teams dropping by after dusk, not to probe a crime but to prevent one. As part of crime prevention month, officers are making late-evening rounds to homes, sharing safety tips, answering queries on cyber fraud and even noting civic concerns, all in a bid to build trust and keep year-end celebrations trouble-free. Teams comprising 15 officers each, led by two police sub-inspectors and accompanied by women personnel, have been visiting houses across neighborhoods, engaging families in late-evening conversations. The visits are timed deliberately. We go at night so that all members of a household are available, said an officer involved in the exercise.

The initiative, known within the force as "area domination", is aimed at building visibility and trust while flagging risks that tend to spike during the year-end festive season. These interactions help us create awareness on crime prevention and also share dos and don'ts for New Year celebrations, DCP Sarah Fathima told..

People have been asking a lot of questions, especially about cybercrimes. We explain how cybercrooks operate and what precautions families should take. We are also

engaging with anti-social elements, rowdy-sheeters and history-sheeters to understand their routine activities. With large-scale celebrations coming up, we want to minimise risks, she said. The doorstep discussions have gone well beyond cyber safety.

Residents raised concerns about drug abuse among minors, abandoned vehicles left unattended on streets, stray dog menace at night and persistent garbage issues. For many households, the conversations became impromptu civic feedback sessions, with officers noting down complaints and offering guidance.

Checks at lodges and PGsAlongside neighbourhood visits, city police have also stepped up inspections of lodges, hotels, paying guest accommodations and service apartments. Officers are verifying the details of occupants, particularly those who have recently arrived in the city.

These visits serve two purposes, a senior officer said. They help us identify whether any suspicious elements are staying in the city, and they also act as a deterrent as anti-social elements become aware of regular police checks. House owners renting out premises to foreign nationals have been strictly instructed to submit tenant details to their jurisdictional police stations without fail.

Container truck rams over 10 vehicles in Anekal

ANEKAL

A major chain accident was reported in Anekal, on the outskirts of Bengaluru, after a large container truck rammed into more than ten vehicles parked along the roadside, leaving several people seriously injured and triggering panic in the area. According to preliminary information, at least five people sustained grievous injuries, while there are fears that two persons may have lost their lives in the incident. The accident occurred when the container truck, travelling from Bestamanahalli towards Chandapura, allegedly went out of control and crashed into vehicles one after another. Eyewitnesses said the truck continued its reckless run for several kilometres, hitting any vehicle that came in its path.

Police from the Surya City station reportedly chased the truck for nearly 14 kilometres, but the driver failed to stop despite repeated attempts. Eventually, members of the public intercepted the vehicle on the Chandapura stretch of the Hosur highway by pelting stones, forcing it to halt. As soon as the truck stopped, angry locals pulled the driver out of the vehicle and assaulted him before handing him over to the police. Initial observations suggest that the driver was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the accident, though this is yet to be officially confirmed.

QUICK READ

Man Commits Suicide by Jumping into Well in Bantwal

Bantwal

A 54-year-old man, Prashanth Baliga, was found dead on Saturday morning after jumping into a well near the Bantwal bypass. The incident has left the local community in shock, as Prashanth was a well-known figure in the area, delivering newspapers and milk to households for several years. According to police reports, Prashanth left home around 4 am to complete his daily routine, but his body was found floating in a well near the bypass around 8 am. His scooter, still loaded with newspapers and milk packets, was parked unattended nearby, raising suspicions among local residents. Prashanth is survived by his wife and three daughters. While the exact reason for the suicide is not yet known, the police have registered a case.

Documentation Key to Bhutaaradhane Research: Prof. Vivek Rai

Mangaluru

Retired Vice-Chancellor Prof. B. A. Vivek Rai emphasised the importance of systematic documentation in research on daivaaradhane (spirit worship) and bhutaaradhane, especially in the digital era. He was speaking at the release of the book "Bhutaaradhane: Maayada Nade Jogada Nudi", authored by folklorist Prof. K. Chinnappa Gowda. Prof. Rai cautioned young researchers against accepting incomplete and misleading information about deities, stressing that research demands thorough preparation and careful attention. The event was organized by the Coastal Women Writers and Readers Association, Giliwindu of the Kannada Studies Department of Mangalore University, Ranga Sangati Cultural Foundation, and the Department of Kannada, St Aloysius College. Critic Rajashekhar Halemane reviewed the book, and renowned daiva dancer Shekhar Parava was felicitated.

Teacher's Tragic End: Govt School PE Teacher Found Dead in Well

Mangaluru

A 51-year-old government school physical education teacher, Prabhakar Jogi, was found dead in a well at his residence in Kondana near Kotekar here. Police suspect that Jogi, who was suffering from neurological issues and depression, took his own life. Jogi, a resident of Daivagudde near Baddakatte, was a well-known figure in the area, delivering newspapers and milk to households. His body was discovered in a well within his house premises by family members who had been searching for him. A case has been registered at the Ullal police station based on a complaint filed by Jogi's son, and further investigation is underway. The incident has sent shockwaves among the local community which is saddened by the development.

Mangaluru Forest Division Launches 'Aane Elli' App to Track Elephants

The app, currently in its pilot phase, monitors elephant movement in three stages: forest department patrols, public reporting, and night patrols

MANGALURU

The Mangaluru Forest Division has launched a mobile application called 'Aane Elli' (Where is the elephant?) to track elephant movement and issue early warnings to local residents. This initiative aims to mitigate the risks posed by frequent elephant encounters and crop damage in the area.

The app, currently in its pilot phase, monitors elephant movement in three stages: forest department patrols, public reporting, and night patrols. It collects data on elephant movement, including photographs, GPS coordinates, and signs of elephant activity, to provide real-time information to officials and the public.

Once fully implemented, the app is expected to improve response times and coordination between forest officials and local residents. The public can also report elephant sightings and track the status of complaints through the app, which generates a ticket number and integrates data into its database.

A command and control centre will be established at the new forest department office building in Mangaluru, and the existing 1926 wildlife helpline will continue to function. The forest department estimates that around 71 elephants currently fall under the Mangaluru Forest Division, covering areas such as Sullia, Subrahmanya, and Puttur ranges.

The 'Aane Elli' app is a significant step towards reducing human-elephant conflicts and promoting coexistence. Similar initiatives, such as the Elephant Alert app, have been successful in other regions, providing real-time data and enhancing situational awareness.

Entrepreneur Sets New Record, Scripts Bhagavad Gita in 5.5 Hours

UDUPI

Sushanth Brahmavar, a 35-year-old entrepreneur from Udupi, has achieved a remarkable feat by writing the entire Bhagavad Gita in just 5 hours and 30 minutes. This incredible record attempt was undertaken as part of the Koti Geetha Lekhana Yajna initiative at the Udupi Sri Krishna Matha Temple on December 22, 2024.

Brahmavar's dedication and perseverance have earned him the title of 'IBR Achiever' and entries in both the Worldwide Book of Records and the India Book of Records. He surpassed the previous record of eight hours set by students of a Patanjali Gurukul.

A native of Brahmavar in Udupi district, Sushanth is a member of the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry and serves as a committee member of the BJP OBC Morcha in Udupi district. He is an alumnus of Sri Poorna Prajna College and Sri Poorna Prajna Evening College, Udupi, and is actively involved in business at the A.P.M.C. Market Yard.

In recognition of his accomplishments, Sushanth was recently honoured with the Udupi district-level Karnataka Rajyotsava Award 2025 by the district administration. He also received blessings from Pejawar seer Sri Vishwaprasanna Theertha Swamiji for his achievement.

Gokarna MLA Orders Fish Market Relocation Within 15 Days

KARWAR

Gokarna's MLA, Dhinakar Shetty, has directed fish vendors to relocate from the current beachfront market to a new location within the next 15 days. The instruction was given during a special meeting held at the Gram Panchayat hall to discuss the relocation of the fish market.

The meeting was convened in response to public complaints about the inconvenience caused by the market's current location, which is reportedly affecting traffic and creating an unhygienic environment. Despite fish vendors expressing reluctance to move, citing lack of basic amenities at the proposed new site, Shetty urged them to comply.

The current market is located on a road connecting the main beach to the sea, leading to congestion and traffic issues. Locals have expressed dissatisfaction with the situation, stating that selling fish in a dirty and smelly area is unacceptable.The proposed relocation site is expected to provide better amenities and a more hygienic environment for vendors and customers alike.

Officials present at the meeting included Deputy Division Officer P. Shravankumar, Tahsildar Shrikrishna Kamkar, Taluk Panchayat EO Rajendra Bhat, Gokarna Gram Panchayat President Sumana Gowda, and members, as well as fish vendors.

The relocation aims to address public concerns and improve the overall environment in Gokarna.

Fake Temple Website Scam: Rajasthan Youth Arrested for Duping Devotees

KOLLUR

The Police have arrested a 21-year-old youth from Rajasthan for allegedly creating a fake website resembling the official portal of the renowned Sri Mookambika Temple and duping devotees by collecting money under the pretext of advance room bookings.

The accused, Nasir Hussain, designed a fraudulent website mimicking the temple's official portal and collected payments from devotees by issuing fake booking receipts. The scam came to light after the Executive Officer of Sri Mookambika Temple lodged a complaint at Kollur Police Station.

A special investigation team, led by Byndoor Circle Inspector Shivakumar B and Kundapura Rural Circle CPI Santosh A. Kaikini, traced the accused to Rajasthan and arrested him on December 19. A laptop used to carry out the fraudulent activity was also seized.

Nasir Hussain was produced before the Byndoor court on December 20 and remanded to judicial custody. The police have urged devotees to make bookings only through the official website of Sri Mookambika Temple and remain vigilant against fraudulent online portals.

This incident highlights the importance of being cautious when making online bookings and transactions, especially when dealing with sensitive information. It's essential to verify the authenticity of websites and ensure they are secure before making any payments.

Philanthropist Michael D'Souza Honoured as 'Kudla Beacon'

MANGALURU

Michael D'Souza, a renowned NRI entrepreneur and philanthropist, has been conferred with the prestigious Kudla Beacon Award at the Roshni Impact Awards 2025. The award recognizes his exceptional leadership in driving socio-economic growth and progress in Dakshina Kannada district.

As managing director of Ivory Grand Real Estate LLC, D'Souza has made significant contributions to various sectors, including real estate, hospitality, and equity investments. He has extended interest-free educational loans worth Rs 33.5 crore to 3,698 students and played a key role in establishing the Civil Service Academy at St Aloysius University.

D'Souza's philanthropic efforts have benefited nearly 10,000 families, with over 417 homes constructed or repaired for the poor. He has also provided sustained financial support and strategic guidance to major institutional projects.

The Roshni Impact Awards 2025 honored six eminent personalities for their outstanding contributions to society. Other awardees include Dr N Joshua Jayaseelan, Dr Anish V Cherian, Advocate Flavia Agnes, Jeeth Milan Roche, and Poonam Pardesi.

Chief guest Dr Ravindranath Shanbagh praised RIA for celebrating real-world changemakers and emphasized the importance of values-driven leadership. Prof Vida Sequeira highlighted the role of education, empathy, and collaboration in creating sustainable social impact.

UDF's Decisive Surge Reshapes North Kerala: A Look at the Local Body Polls

KASARAGOD

In Kasaragod, the UDF retained control of the municipal council, largely on the strength of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)

The recent local body elections in Kerala have yielded a significant shift in the state's political landscape, with the United Democratic Front (UDF) emerging as the clear winner. The UDF, led by the Congress, secured 38.81% of the votes, while the Left Democratic Front (LDF), led by the CPI(M), trailed behind with 33.45%. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) secured 14.71%, with the remaining 13.03% shared among other parties and independents.

The UDF's victory was most pronounced in Malappuram district, where it won all 33 seats in the district panchayat, erasing the LDF entirely from the council. The UDF also dominated in Wayanad, capturing the district panchayat, all four block panchayats, and two of the district's three municipalities. In Kasaragod, the UDF retained control of the municipal council, largely on the strength of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML).

The results indicate a broader realignment in Kerala's politics, driven by factors such as anti-incumbency sentiment, the Sabarimala gold theft issue, and perceived hostility towards the Muslim community. The UDF's wins in Vadakara, Perambra, Nadapuram, and Kuttiyadi reflected a quiet but decisive response to the attack on Vadakara MP Shafi Parambil by Kerala police.

The LDF's decline was evident in its reduced numbers in the Kozhikode Corporation, where it lost its absolute majority for the first time. The UDF's gains in the corporation, coupled with its victories in municipalities and panchayats, signal a significant shift in the state's political landscape. The NDA's increased presence in the corporation and its wins in municipalities also indicate a growing influence in the state.

Overall, the UDF's decisive surge in north Kerala has reshaped the state's politics, and are likely to have implications for the state's future politics.

Doctor Loses Rs 22 Lakh in Cyber Fraud, Bank Alert Prevents Further Loss

MANGALURU

A city-based doctor has fallen victim to a cyber fraud scam, losing Rs 22 lakh after being deceived by unknown persons posing as foreign donors and customs officials. The incident has highlighted the growing threat of cybercrime and the importance of vigilance when dealing with unsolicited calls and transactions.

According to police, the doctor, who is actively involved in social service, received a call from an unidentified individual from abroad claiming that a donation of Rs 25 lakh in US dollars would be sent in appreciation of his social work. Believing the claim, the doctor agreed to receive the amount and subsequently received calls from impersonators posing as customs officials, who demanded customs charges for the release of the parcel.

Over the past two to three days, the doctor transferred money in stages to multiple bank accounts provided by the fraudsters, amounting to Rs 22 lakh. However, when he attempted to transfer an additional Rs 3 lakh, bank staff grew suspicious and alerted the City Cyber Crime (CEN) police.

The police promptly intervened, confirming that the doctor had been cheated and stopping further payments. Police Commissioner Sudheer Kumar Reddy stated that a recent meeting with bankers had instructed them to monitor suspicious financial transactions closely, which led to the timely intervention in this case.

The police have advised the public to be cautious of unsolicited calls promising large sums of money and to verify any such claims before making payments. This incident serves as a reminder of the importance of being vigilant and reporting suspicious activity to prevent cybercrime.

The police are investigating the matter and urge anyone with information to come forward.

World Konkani Centre Launches Research Lecture on Mother Goddess Worship in Goa

MANGALURU

The World Konkani Centre (Vishva Konkani Kendra), Shaktinagar, on Saturday hosted a scholarly programme marking the near-completion of a major research project titled "Worship of Mother Goddesses in Goa", undertaken under the Vardhani Fellowship. The programme was inaugurated by noted Goan historian and researcher Dr Rohit Phalgawankar, who also delivered a detailed lecture on his findings.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Phalgawankar said that the worship of the Mother Goddess has been a deeply embedded spiritual tradition among Konkani-speaking communities since ancient times. However, he noted that such practices have not received adequate systematic academic attention. The present research initiative by the World Konkani Centre, he said, attempts to fill this gap through a structured and evidence-based study. He lauded both the Centre and the Vardhani Fellowship for supporting the project, which is now in its final stage.

During his illustrated lecture, Dr Phalgawankar presented visual documentation and interpretative insights into several Goan 'Devi' temples, including both anthropomorphic idol worship and abstract, formless representations. He shared findings from his study of traditional rituals and belief systems followed in nearly 67 Mother Goddess temples across Goa.

World Konkani Centre president CA Nandagopal Shenai welcomed the gathering. The Vardhani Fellowship has sponsored the publication costs of the forthcoming research book, the completed manuscript of which was formally handed over to the Centre. Dr Phalgawankar was felicitated on the occasion.

Renowned photographer Pundalik Pai (Anna, Mangaluru), who documented the project over nearly a year, informed the audience that the visual material would be published as a high-quality coffee-table book. He was also honoured by the Centre's Trust Board.

The programme was compered by Suchitra S Shenai, while treasurer BR Bhat proposed the vote of thanks. Several trustees, cultural leaders and community representatives were present.

QUICK READ

Shivalinga appears in Devanahalli, drawing devotees in awe

DEVANAHALLI

Faith and devotion have once again come to the forefront as a Shivalinga has reportedly appeared in an ancient kalyani in Devanahalli, drawing large numbers of devotees and curious onlookers. The Shivalinga was noticed in the historic kalyani located at Puttappana Gudibeedi, an area known for its religious and cultural significance. The kalyani, believed to be thousands of years old, is associated with the Sri Peethambara Anjaneya Swamy Temple. Locals say the water body has long been revered, but the sudden appearance of a Shiva-shaped linga has left devotees astonished and spiritually moved.

Elderly man files police complaint against children

HOLENARASIPUR

A tense family conflict has come to light from Holenarasipur, where a 68-year-old man has approached the police seeking protection after alleging threats to his life from his own children. The dispute reportedly arose after the man remarried, a decision strongly opposed by his family members. The complainant, Rajanna (68), recently married Geeta (58), a woman who has been living separately following the death of her first husband. The marriage, which took place with the consent of the couple, has triggered anger and resentment among Rajanna's children, who allegedly objected to their father marrying at an advanced age. According to Rajanna's complaint, his children two daughters and a son have not only opposed the marriage but have also allegedly threatened him over property matters.

Winter crops bring cheer to farmers in Devanahalli

DEVANAHALLI

District is witnessing a seasonal surge in winter vegetables, with green peas and hyacinth beans making a prominent entry into local markets. The arrival of these crops has brought visible relief and happiness among farmers, as strong demand and favourable prices have translated into better returns compared to recent seasons. Just a few days ago, shops selling peas and hyacinth beans were a rare sight along the town's roadsides. However, the situation has changed dramatically in a short span of time. Stalls and temporary shops have sprung up rapidly across Vijayapura, resembling what locals describe as a dog's umbrella phenomenon appearing suddenly and in large numbers.

Officials prepare for Bashettihalli, Hemavathipete ward by-elections

Preparations are complete for Town Panchayat and Municipal Council by-elections scheduled in Doddaballapura on December 21

DODDABALLAPURA

The Bashettihalli Town Panchayat elections in Doddaballapura taluk and the by-election to the 21st ward of the Hemavathipete Municipal Council are set to be held on December 21, with authorities confirming that all arrangements are firmly in place. Election officials stated that the process has entered its final stage, ensuring smooth and transparent polling across the designated areas.

Located in Doddaballapura, the polling exercise will cover voters under the jurisdiction of the Bashettihalli Town Panchayat and the Hemavathipete ward, where the by-poll is being conducted. Officials from the Election Commission, along with the taluk administration, Town Panchayat authorities and the Municipal Council, have jointly coordinated the preparations over the past several days.

As part of the logistical arrangements, electronic voting machines (EVMs) and other essential polling materials were dispatched and reached their respective polling booths on Saturday. Election staff and security personnel reported to the polling stations after collecting the necessary equipment from the mustering, de-mustering and counting centre established at Kongadiyappa High School in the city. The movement of personnel and materials was carried out under strict supervision to ensure timely deployment and adherence to election protocols.

Authorities have also ensured adequate security arrangements at all polling booths to maintain law and order during the voting process. Police personnel and home guards have been deployed in sensitive areas, while election officials have appealed to voters to cooperate and exercise their franchise peacefully.

Deputy Commissioner and District Election Officer A.B. Basavaraju personally visited the mustering centre to inspect the readiness of election arrangements. During his visit, he reviewed the distribution of voting machines and other materials, interacted with officials, and assessed the preparedness of staff assigned to polling duties. He also briefed election personnel on their responsibilities, emphasising the importance of conducting free, fair and orderly elections.

Leopard jumps electric fence, kills four cows

A leopard attack in Gangavadi village killed four cows, triggering panic and renewed calls for urgent wildlife intervention.

YELANDUR

A tragic incident highlighting the growing man-animal conflict was reported from Yelandur taluk, where a leopard leapt over a wire fence and killed four cows in Gangavadi village. The incident has left local farmers shaken and raised serious concerns over safety, livestock protection, and the effectiveness of preventive measures taken by the forest department.

According to villagers, the leopard entered the cattle shed area under the cover of darkness and attacked the animals despite the presence of a wire fence. The four cows, belonging to farmer Ramayya, were found dead by morning, bearing clear signs of a leopard attack. The incident has intensified fear among residents, many of whom depend entirely on agriculture and dairy farming for their livelihoods.

Following the incident, A. R. Krishnamurthy, the MLA from Kollegal, visited Gangavadi village on Sunday to inspect the site and interact with the affected family. During his visit, he reviewed the damage, spoke to forest officials, and listened to the grievances of farmers who have been repeatedly raising alarms about leopard movement in the area.

Farmer Ramayya, speaking to the MLA, said dairy farming was the sole source of income for his family. Out of my five cows, four have been killed. We have been reporting leopard movement for the last three to four months. If the forest department had acted seriously earlier, this tragedy could have been avoided, he said, expressing deep distress over the loss.

Responding to the situation, MLA A.R. Krishnamurthy directed forest officials to immediately initiate steps to capture the leopard. He stressed that protecting farmers, their families, and their livestock was a priority and instructed authorities to install cages, deploy surveillance, and intensify night patrols in and around vulnerable villages. He also assured the affected family of compensation as per government norms and urged officials to process relief without delay. Human and wildlife safety must go hand in hand. Preventive measures should be strengthened to avoid repeated incidents, the MLA said. The incident underscores the increasing frequency of human-wildlife conflict in the forest-bordering regions of Chamarajanagar district.

Alert villagers stopped illegal calf transport near Hunasepalya, rescuing fourteen animals and prompting swift police action

Public intercepts illegal calf transport near Hunasepalya

HANUR

In a decisive act of vigilance, members of the public rescued 14 calves that were being illegally transported to a slaughterhouse in neighbouring Tamil Nadu near Hunasepalya village in Hanur. The timely intervention by villagers prevented the animals from being taken across state borders and underscored the role of community participation in curbing illegal livestock movement.

According to police sources, locals received information that a Bolero goods vehicle was carrying calves without valid permits and was headed towards Tamil Nadu. Acting immediately, residents of Hunasepalya blocked the vehicle on the road, safely rescued the animals, and alerted the police. The calves, described as mute animals by witnesses, were reportedly being transported in violation of livestock transport and animal welfare regulations.

Upon receiving the alert, a police team led by PSI Manjunath Prasad rushed to the spot under the guidance of Anandamurthy, Inspector of Hanur Police Station. The officers seized the Bolero vehicle and took custody of all 14 calves. Preliminary checks indicated the absence of mandatory documents such as transport permits, veterinary certificates, and destination authorization—requirements essential for lawful animal transport.

Police officials stated that a case has been registered under relevant sections of animal welfare and transport laws, and further investigation is underway to identify the source of the animals, the intended destination, and those involved in the illegal operation. The seized vehicle has been impounded, and statements from witnesses are being recorded.

The rescued calves were handed over to the police and arrangements were initiated to move them to a safe shelter, where they would receive veterinary examination, food, and care. Authorities said the animals would be produced before the competent authority as per procedure and later rehabilitated in accordance with the law.

Residents lauded the swift response by the police and reiterated their commitment to preventing cruelty and illegal trade. Community leaders noted that such incidents have been reported intermittently along border routes and called for enhanced night patrols, checkpoints, and awareness drives to deter offenders.

Saptapura Well faces neglect

DHARWAD

Dharwad's historic Saptapura well, once a vital source of drinking water, is now buried under garbage, plastic bottles, and sticks, raising concerns among local residents. Built in 1942, the well served the Sapta cities, giving it the name 'Saptapura Bavi,' and has long been part of the city's heritage. In addition to Saptapura, Dharwad is home to several other ancient wells, including Nuchambli Bavi, Koppammana Bavi, Agasara Bavi, and Udupi Raya Bavi. Many of these wells are either neglected or closed off by authorities, while some, like Nuchambli Bavi, have been partially restored by the Municipal Corporation in recent years. Local resident Fakki Rappa Hadimani urged the administration to take immediate action. "Cleanliness of these wells is crucial to prevent the spread of diseases like malaria. The Municipal Corporation should maintain the wells, install fences, and put up nameplates to ensure public safety," he said. The condition of Saptapura well highlights the challenges of preserving heritage structures in a rapidly modernizing city.

State-level senior women's kabaddi championship in Anekal

ANEKAL

Anekal is set to become the hub of women's kabaddi later this month as the Honalu Yayot State Level Kabaddi Championship-2025 for the senior women's category will be held from December 23 to 25. The tournament will take place at the Harapanahalli Brindavan School premises near Jigani in Anekal taluk, according to Dr. B.L. Shekhar, Head of Brindavan Educational Institutions.

Announcing the event at a press conference held in Jigani, Dr. Shekhar said the championship aims to promote and strengthen women's kabaddi in the region and across Karnataka. He noted that while men's kabaddi tournaments have been organized frequently in the taluk over the last four to five years, women's kabaddi has not received the same level of encouragement. The upcoming state-level tournament is intended to bridge that gap and provide a competitive platform for women athletes.

Dr. Shekhar explained that the championship has been organized with the broader objective of identifying and nurturing talented women players from South India, who could go on to represent the state and the country at national-level competitions. He emphasized that exposure to high-quality tournaments at the state level plays a crucial role in preparing players for national and international events.

The inauguration of the championship will be carried out by Arjuna Award winners and renowned kabaddi players B.C. Ramesh and Mamata Poojary, adding prestige to the event. Their presence is expected to inspire young players and motivate them to pursue kabaddi at a professional level.

Parents donate organs of son killed in road accident

MANDYA

In a deeply moving incident that has drawn praise from across the region, the parents of a young man who died in a road accident chose to donate his organs, giving new life to several others. The incident occurred in Belagola village of Srirangapatna, where the family's humane decision has been widely lauded as an inspiring example of compassion amid tragedy.

The deceased youth, identified as Yashwant (21), was a resident of Belagola village in the Sakkare Nadu region of Mandya district. On December 13, Yashwant sustained severe injuries in a horrific road accident involving two motorcycles near Manti on the KRS Road. The collision left him critically injured, prompting immediate medical attention.

Following the accident, Yashwant was rushed to a nearby hospital, where doctors fought to save his life. Despite continuous treatment and intensive care, medical experts later informed the family that Yashwant had suffered complete brain failure. After thorough evaluation, doctors declared him brain-dead, leaving the family devastated by the sudden and irreversible loss.

In the midst of grief, Yashwant's parents made an extraordinary and courageous decision—to donate his organs so that others might live. With consent from the family and coordination by hospital authorities, the organ donation process was initiated in accordance with medical and legal protocols. Doctors confirmed that Yashwant's organs could save or significantly improve the lives of multiple patients awaiting transplants. The decision has been widely appreciated by doctors, social organisations, and members of the public, who described it as an act of supreme humanity.

Medical professionals noted that such awareness and willingness toward organ donation remain limited, making the family's choice even more significant. Even in their darkest moment, the family chose to think of others.

CHILD MARRIAGE AWARENESS

Awareness drive against child marriage draws massive participation

ANEKAL

Anekal town witnessed a strong show of social commitment on Saturday as a large-scale legal awareness program focusing on the prevention of child marriage was organized, drawing enthusiastic participation from hundreds of students. The event aimed to educate the public about the legal consequences of child marriage and highlight its long-term social, educational, and psychological impact on children, especially young girls.

As part of the program, students from various educational institutions gathered early in the day and marched through the main streets of Anekal, holding placards with powerful messages condemning child marriage. The march attracted widespread attention from residents, shopkeepers, and commuters, many of whom paused to read the messages and listen to the slogans raised by the participants. Slogans such as Child marriage is a crime. Brighten the lives of children and stop child marriage echoed through the town, reinforcing the core message of the campaign. Organizers said the objective of the march was not only to spread awareness but also to encourage community members to take responsibility in reporting and preventing child marriages. Students were seen interacting with the public, explaining how child marriage deprives children of education, curtails their personal development, and pushes them into early responsibilities they are not prepared to handle.

The program was jointly organized by the Taluk Legal Services Committee, Taluk Lawyers Association, Bengaluru West District Child Protection Department, Education Department, and the Women and Child Welfare Department. Officials from these departments addressed the gathering after the march, stressing the importance of coordinated efforts between authorities, schools, parents, and local communities to eradicate the social evil.

Speaking on the occasion, District Judge B. Somashekhar emphasized that child marriage is not merely a social issue but a punishable offence under the law. He stated that such practices increase illiteracy, perpetuate poverty, and negatively affect the overall progress of society.

QUICK READ

MP Babu inaugurates new flyover on NH-75

NARASAPURA

Kolar district marked a significant milestone in road infrastructure development with the inauguration of a newly constructed flyover on the Bangalore–Tirupati National Highway-75 near Narasapura in the taluk. The flyover was inaugurated by M. Mallesh Babu, who said the project would greatly ease traffic congestion and improve connectivity in the industrially important region. The flyover, located in the Bellur and Narasapura industrial zones, has been constructed at an estimated cost of approximately □28.03 crore. Stretching across a length of 1.6 kilometres, the structure is expected to play a crucial role in streamlining vehicular movement along this busy highway corridor.

Senior athletes shine at 44th athletic championship

KOLAR

The indomitable spirit of senior athletes was on full display at the Sir M. Visvesvaraya Stadium in Kolar, as around 700 participants from 25 districts took part in the 44th State Masters Athletic Championship. Defying age and expectations, the athletes competed with energy, determination, and visible passion, particularly in the running events that drew loud applause from spectators. The championship, organized under the auspices of the State Masters Athletic Association in association with the District Masters Athletic Association and transformed the stadium into a vibrant arena of sportsmanship and inspiration. Participants from various age categories demonstrated that physical fitness and competitive spirit do not diminish with age.

Fmr MLA recalls efforts to bring Hemavati irrigation project

Former MLA A. Manjunath highlighted sustained efforts and political challenges behind bringing the Hemavati irrigation project to Magadi

MAGADI

Former MLA A. Manjunath has reiterated that significant and consistent efforts were made to bring the much-needed Hemavati Irrigation Project to Magadi taluk, calling it one of the most important developmental initiatives for the region.

Speaking at a press conference held at the JDS office, he detailed the long and complex process involved in securing approvals and ensuring the project moved from planning to execution.

Manjunath said he worked closely with former minister H.M. Revanna and former Member of Parliament D.K. Suresh from the very beginning of the project.

Their efforts, he explained, started from the crucial stage of preparing and getting approval for the Detailed Project Report (DPR), which is often the most challenging phase for large irrigation schemes.

He stressed that persistent coordination with the government and technical departments was required to overcome administrative hurdles.

Recalling the early days of the project, Manjunath said there was skepticism and criticism from certain political quarters.

When the DPR approval was being sought, then MLA Balakrishna had openly criticized the proposal, questioning whether Hemavati water would ever actually reach Magadi. Despite such opposition, Manjunath said he continued to pursue the matter with determination, engaging with officials and policymakers to ensure the project did not stall.

After sustained efforts, the DPR approval was finally obtained. Manjunath explained that a comprehensive plan was then introduced to supply water to 83 lakes across the taluk by covering every village. This ambitious plan, he said, was designed to address chronic water scarcity, improve groundwater levels, and provide long-term benefits to agriculture and drinking water needs.

He also acknowledged the role played by Engineer Nagaraju and Managing Director Jayaprakash, who, according to him, placed strong emphasis on the effective implementation of the project. Their technical guidance and monitoring helped translate policy decisions into on-ground action.

Ramanagara gears up for Reshmenadu Kannada festival

RAMANAGAR

Ramanagara city is set to host the Reshmenadu Kannada Festival with grand decorations and cultural performances.

The Municipal Council of Ramanagara is making elaborate and attractive arrangements for the Reshmenadu Kannada Festival, which will be held at the city's district stadium on the evening of December 22. Announcing the preparations, Municipal Council President K. Seshadri, popularly known as Shashi, said the festival is being organized on a large scale to celebrate Kannada language, culture, and heritage, with the participation of artists from across the state.

In preparation for the festival, the city has been transformed with decorative lighting and festive arrangements. All major roads, roundabouts, and government buildings have been illuminated with electric lights, creating a vibrant and celebratory atmosphere.

Key stretches such as MPMC Market to the District Collector's Office, the Bangalore–Mysore Highway, Aizur Circle to Kempegowda Circle, Railway Station Road, M.G. Road, Junior College Maidan Road, and several other important roads have been beautifully decorated. Kannada flags have been hoisted along all major routes, and garlands have been tied along the procession path, reflecting the spirit of Kannada pride.

As part of the celebrations, a grand cultural procession will be held, which is scheduled to begin at 3 pm. The procession will feature participation from various art and cultural groups representing as many as 20 districts of Karnataka. Organizers said the event is designed to showcase the rich diversity of folk traditions and cultural expressions found across different regions of the state.

Dozens of folk art forms will be performed during the procession and at the main venue.

These include Mysore Nagari, Uttara Kannada's Damami dance, Chamarajanagar's Soligara dance, Kolar's Maragalu and Garudi Gombe, Hassan's Chattimela, Mandya's Kadugollara Kolata, Tumkur's Manevu dance, Shimoga's Holi dance, Dharwad's Jaggalige Mela, Belgaum's Karadi Majalu, and Kodagu's Jenu Kurubara dance, among others. Each performance is expected to highlight the unique cultural identity of its region.

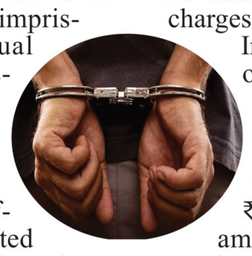
Municipal Council officials stated that arrangements have been made to ensure smooth traffic movement, crowd management, and safety during the event. Adequate facilities for artists and spectators, including seating, lighting, and sound systems, are also being put in place.

A Ramanagara court sentenced a man to 12 years imprisonment in a decade-old POCSO sexual assault case

Court sentences POCSO convict to 12 years in prison

RAMANAGARA

In a significant judgment reinforcing accountability for crimes against children, the District Additional and Sessions Court in Ramanagara has sentenced a man to 12 years of rigorous imprisonment in a sexual assault case registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The offence was committed against a minor girl nearly a decade ago, with the case finally reaching its legal conclusion after prolonged proceedings.



The convicted individual has been identified as Muniyarappa alias Varadaraju. According to the prosecution, a case was registered against him by the Kaggalipur police in 2015 following a complaint related to sexual assault on a minor. After years of investigation, trial, and examination of evidence, the court found the accused guilty of the charges leveled against him.

In addition to the prison sentence, the court imposed a fine of ₹15,000 on the convict. The court further directed that ₹10,000 from the fine amount be paid to the survivor as compensation, acknowledging the trauma and suffering endured by the victim. Legal experts noted that while monetary compensation cannot undo the harm caused, such directions reflect the judiciary's intent to provide some measure of relief to survivors of sexual crimes.

The verdict was delivered by K.N. Saraswati, who underscored the seriousness of offences committed against children and the need for strict punishment to deter similar crimes. The court observed that crimes under the POCSO Act strike at the very foundation of society and must be dealt with firmly to protect the rights and dignity of minors.

The prosecution was conducted by Pushpalatha, who argued that the evidence on record clearly established the guilt of the accused beyond reasonable doubt. The prosecution relied on witness testimonies, medical evidence, and other supporting documents to substantiate the charges, leading to the conviction.

Villagers oppose solid waste disposal unit near Melanahalli

HULIYARU

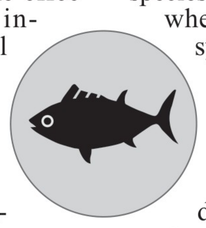
Strong opposition has emerged from villagers in Huliyaru against the proposed construction of a solid waste disposal unit planned by the Huliyaru Town Panchayat near Melanahalli village in the hobli. The resistance came to the fore when Tahsildar M. Mamatha visited the proposed site for inspection, only to be confronted by residents who firmly stated that they would not permit the project under any circumstances.According to villagers, the establishment of a solid waste disposal unit near their habitation would pose serious risks to health, agriculture, and the local environment. They expressed fears of foul odor, groundwater contamination.

Illegal African catfish farming sparks public anger

CHINTAMANI

Growing public discontent has been reported in Chintamani taluk, where residents allege that authorities are turning a blind eye to the continued practice of banned African catfish farming. The illegal activity is reportedly taking place unabated around Chinnasandra village, triggering concerns over environmental damage, public health risks, and administrative inaction. According to local residents, African catfish fry are being illegally imported from abroad and transported into the region through routes passing via West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. These fry are then reared in makeshift ponds constructed on agricultural lands. In several cases, individuals are said to be renting farmers' lands specifically to dig ponds for catfish farming, despite a clear ban on the species.

Villagers claim that repeated complaints to concerned departments have yielded little response. They allege that fisheries and local administrative authorities have failed to take effective action against those involved, allowing the illegal trade and farming to flourish openly. This perceived inaction has led to mounting frustration among residents, who fear long-term consequences if the practice continues unchecked.



Experts point out that African catfish is not a native species. Originating from Africa and Bangladesh, the species poses serious ecological threats when introduced into local water systems. Scientists have emphasized that any fish species intended for farming must receive official approval after thorough environmental and health assessments. Fisheries department officials have confirmed that no such approval has been granted for African catfish farming in the state.

MILK INCENTIVE HIKE WELCOMED AS BOOST FOR DAIRY FARMERS

MAGADI

Magadi witnessed a positive response from the dairy sector following the government's decision to increase milk incentive payments to farmers by ₹2 per litre. Bamul Milk Cooperative Society Director H.N. Ashok congratulated the state government for the move, stating that it would significantly benefit dairy farmers and strengthen rural livelihoods.

Ashok was speaking at a program organized to distribute electric fodder cutting machines, which was held at the town's old veterinary hospital premises. Addressing farmers and officials gathered at the event, he said the increase in milk incentives reflects the government's commitment to supporting the dairy farming community, which plays a crucial role in the rural economy.

Explaining the incentive revision, Ashok said that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had earlier increased the milk incentive from ₹3 to ₹5 per litre. Subsequently, during the Belagavi legislative session, the incentive was further enhanced by ₹2 per litre. He emphasized that this cumulative increase would encourage more farmers to actively engage in dairy farming and invest in improving milk production and quality.

Ashok highlighted that dairy farming has emerged as a dependable source of income for many rural families, especially small and marginal farmers. The increased incentive, he said, would help farmers manage rising input costs, including fodder, labor, and animal healthcare, while also motivating them to expand their dairy activities.

Sharing production statistics, Ashok stated that around 18 lakh litres of milk are being produced every day. Out of this total, nearly 10 lakh litres of milk are sold directly. The remaining quantity is utilized for the manufacture of various dairy products at Kanakapura, contributing to value addition and employment generation in the region.

Focusing on Magadi taluk, Ashok said that approximately two lakh litres of milk are currently being produced daily. He added that efforts are underway to further strengthen the dairy sector in the taluk, with a target to increase daily milk production by an additional 50,000 litres in the coming period. Initiatives such as providing modern equipment, improving veterinary services, and ensuring timely payments to farmers are part of this strategy.

NAME CHANGE

I, **SYED SHAOOR AHMED** , S/o, Syed Shafath Ulla Sakhaff, Resident of No, 242, Syed Wadi Channapatna Ramanagar Dist 562160, have changed my name to **SYED SHAOOR AHMED SAKHAFF** , vide affidavit dated: 21.12.2025 before notary B.A. LAKSHMINARAYANA RAO, Bengaluru

NAME CHANGE

I, **HINA KOUSER** , W/o, Mohammed Mubarak Pasha, Resident of No 82,16th Main 6th Cross EWS Colony 2nd Stage BTM Layout Bengaluru Dist, 560076, have changed my name to **HINA KOUSAR** , vide affidavit dated: 21.12.2025 before notary B.A. LAKSHMINARAYANA RAO, Bengaluru

NAME CHANGE

I, **SYED SHAFATH ULLA SKAFF** , S/o, Syed Murtuza Sakhaff, Resident of No, 242, Syed Wadi Channapatna Ramanagar Dist 562160, have changed my name to **SYED SHAFATH ULLA SAKHAFF** , vide affidavit dated: 21.12.2025 before notary B.A. LAKSHMINARAYANA RAO, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **HUSAIN** , S/o, Mohammed Gouse, Resident of No,70,1st Floor 7th Cross Srinidhi Layout Kambipura Bengaluru Dist,560074, have changed my name to **HUSSAIN** , vide affidavit dated: 21.12.2025 before notary B.A. LAKSHMINARAYANA RAO, Bengaluru.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: **080-41209042**

PUBLIC NOTICE

Under instruction from my client, ki Mobility Solutions Private Limited (now merged TVS Automobile Solutions Pvt. Ltd.) having its corporate office at No. 58, Eldams Road, Teynampet, Chennai- 600 018. This notice is issued to the owners (including respective Insurance Companies, Financiers) of the below mentioned vehicles, who have left their vehicles in my client's workshop/s, for repair services and have not taken delivery of the said vehicles till date and also not settled the outstanding dues for the repair bills to my client. In spite of several individual reminders sent to the owners by my client, no one has come forward to take delivery of the below mentioned vehicles from my client's workshop and as such this Final Public Notice is issued to the respective owners, calling upon them to take delivery of their vehicles from my client by settling the outstanding due amount for the repair bills including interest on the unpaid amount till the date of payment and other charges payable if any.

Further, if any person/ finance company claims right or demand in respect of a vehicle or any person has any valid objection, shall provide the same in writing, with supportive documents either to the undersigned or to my client's corporate office as mentioned above, **within seven (7) days** from the date of this publication, failing which it shall be construed and presumed that there are no claims and objections from any person in respect of the vehicle.

In the absence of any claim or objection within the above-mentioned period, my client shall be constrained to take appropriate legal action(s), including disposing of the vehicle as SCRAP at the cost of the owner of the respective vehicle/ finance company/ Institution or any other person claiming interest/ demand of the vehicle. The details of the vehicles are as follows:-

Vehicle Numbers:

Vehicle	Regn. No.	Outlet/ Location
Maruti Suzuki - Omni	KA04M7891	RR Nagar
Honda - City	KA04MJ4629	Kalkere
Fiat - Palio	KA05MG2605	RR Nagar
Honda - Civic	KA03MF8767	RR Nagar
Chevrolet - Beat	KA51MA8794	Magadi Road
Maruti Suzuki 800	KA03Z7933	Kalkere
Honda - City	KA02D9806	BG Road
Hyundai - Accent	KA04AA5474	BG Road
BMW	MH05BB4647	BG Road
Volkswagen - Polo	KA03MV1116	RR Nagar
Maruti Baleno Standard	KA03ME6749	RR Nagar
Hyundai - I10	KA53MA5033	BG Road
Maruti Suzuki - A Star	KA01MF1936	RR Nagar

Mr. M.THAJUDEEN, Advocate, Madras High Court
Office:- No.37B, Gopalapuram 2nd Street, Thiru.Vi.Ka.Nagar, Chennai - 600082. Mobile: 9176049977

MAHANAGARA PALIKE, KALABURAGI
Ph.08472-278675, Flax No.08472-260776, E-mail: itstaff_ulb_gulbarga@yahoo.com
No: KMP/EE/TS-01/CF/Computer operator Call-3/2025-26 Date : 20.12.2025
E-Procurement Tender Notification No: 23/2025-26 Date: 20.12.2025
1) Name of Work : 2025-26 Corporation fund (Providing the service of computer operators/ data entry operators on outsource basis to Kalaburagi Mahanagara Palike for the year DMA/ 2025-26/SE5298/Call-3 (Service Tender). Estimate Cost: 129.00 Lakhs, **2)** Head of Account: 2025-26 Corporation fund. **3)** Tender Amount : Lowest Tender Amount/Highest Tender Amount **Rs.129,00,000.00, 4)** Eligibility of Contractor : As Per Bid Document, **5)** Pre Bid Meeting Date and Time : **26.12.2025 11:00am, 6)** Last Date for Bid Submission : **29.12.2025 Upto 4:30pm 7)** Cost of Tender Schedule : Tender Fee As Per e-portal Lowest EMD Max /Tender Fee As Per e-portal Highest EMD Max Rs.**1,93,500.00, 8)** Tender opening Date : **30.12.2025** Up to 4:35pm, **9)** Tender Financial Bid opening Date : **31.12.2025** Up to **11.30am,** 10) Contact Address & Mobile No: Executive Engineer, Kalaburagi Mahanagara Palike,Kalaburagi. 9620341599. **11)** Web Site: **www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in**
Sd/- Executive Engineer, Kalaburagi Mahanagara Palike, Kalaburagi.
DIPR/Kalaburagi/877/Deshpande Publicity/2025-26

QUICK READ

Delhi Police rescue missing minors, arrest suspect

New Delhi
Delhi Police's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit rescued two missing minors, including a specially-abled boy, and reunited them with their families. A 24-year-old suspect, Vikas, was arrested in connection with the girl's case. The boy, 16, had wandered away from home on December 8 and was found near Alipur. The girl, also 16, went missing on December 20 and was traced to a flat in Jahangirpuri. Police said she was allegedly taken by the suspect. Investigations are ongoing. Authorities praised the swift action by the AHTU, which used technical surveillance, social media alerts, and field checks to locate the minors safely.

One killed as bus hits parked truck in Telangana

Hyderabad
One person died and 36 others were injured when a Telangana State Road Transport bus crashed into a parked truck in Khammam district on Sunday morning. The truck had stopped due to a breakdown, and its cleaner, working underneath, was killed in the collision. Injured passengers were taken to Khammam Government Hospital. In a separate incident in Sangareddy, a fire broke out at a cotton mill after a tractor battery spark, destroying 3,000 tonnes of cotton and causing property loss over Rs two crore. No casualties were reported. Authorities are investigating both accidents.

$1,600 stolen from tourist recovered by Delhi Police

New Delhi
Delhi Police recovered $1,600 stolen from an Iranian tourist's purse at ISBT Kashmere Gate and arrested a 26-year-old bus helper in connection with the theft. The victim, Fareshteh Sayanjali, had left her purse on a FlixBus from Rishikesh. Police registered a case and launched an investigation, questioning the bus staff. Under interrogation, the helper, Monish, confessed to taking the cash. A raid at his residence in Jahangirpuri led to the full recovery of the money. Authorities said Monish, who has been working with FlixBus for a year, misled staff before being caught.

VP Radhakrishnan calls meditation is key to Viksit Bharat

Radhakrishnan said meditation fosters inner peace, clarity, and unity, reflecting India's Vedic heritage and connection with society and nature

HYDERABAD

Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Sunday said meditation is essential for India's collective progress towards becoming Viksit Bharat, not only as an economic power but also as a spiritual leader. He was speaking at the World Meditation Day event held at Kanha Shanti Vanam, the global headquarters of Heartfulness near Hyderabad.

More than 30,000 people attended the event in person at the world's largest meditation hall, while over one million participants joined virtually from across the globe. The meditation programme was organised under the theme "One World, One Heart" and was led by Daaji, the global guide of Heartfulness and President of Shri Ram Chandra Mission.

The event was attended by Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma and Telangana IT Minister Sridhar Babu. The Vice President praised the Heartfulness movement for promoting peace, harmony, and spiritual wellbeing. He noted that Heartfulness meditation is being practised by police personnel in Madhya Pradesh and has brought positive changes in their mindset and behaviour.

Radhakrishnan said meditation brings inner peace and clarity of mind. He highlighted India's ancient spiritual heritage rooted in the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Gita, which has guided humanity towards wisdom and unity. He said meditation helps people rise above divisions and connect with society and nature.

Governor Varma said meditation guides the inner journey from confusion to clarity and helps dissolve ego while promoting empathy and goodwill. Daaji explained that meditation nourishes the mind just as food nourishes the body and helps raise human consciousness.

The session was open to people from all backgrounds and encouraged collective meditation for global harmony and wellbeing.

Aravalli protection rules remain intact: Bhupender Yadav

NEW DELHI

Yadav said the Supreme Court directed all four states to use a uniform Aravalli range definition from a 1968 study, with a 100-metre buffer from the base

Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav on Sunday firmly rejected claims that protection norms for the Aravalli mountain range have been diluted. He said no relaxation has been granted and accused some groups of spreading misinformation on a sensitive environmental issue.

Addressing a press conference, the minister said the Aravalli range is one of the world's oldest mountain systems. It stretches across Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Gujarat, covering 39 districts and an area of about 1.44 lakh square kilometres. He said the issue has been under judicial review since 1985, with a strong focus on strict regulation.

Yadav said the Supreme Court has directed all four states to follow a uniform definition of the Aravalli range. This definition is based on a geological study conducted in 1968 and includes a 100 metre protection buffer. He clarified that this buffer applies from the base of the mountain, not just the visible top.

The minister criticised certain online platforms and individuals for falsely claiming that the protection rule applies only to the upper portion of the hills. He said even if the base of the mountain extends underground, the 100 metre protection still applies from that point.

He stressed that mining is completely banned in the Aravalli hills of Delhi and remains under the Supreme Court's supervision. Any suggestion that mining has been allowed or relaxed in the Delhi Aravalli region is incorrect, he added.

Highlighting the extent of protection, Yadav said only about 0.19 percent of the total Aravalli area may be eligible for mining under existing laws. The remaining region continues to enjoy full protection.

He urged people not to believe rumours and said the government remains committed to protecting the Aravallis for environmental balance and future generations.

Yadav reviews strategies to reduce elephant conflicts

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Sunday reviewed human-elephant conflicts across India, following a train accident in Assam that killed seven elephants. The meeting at Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, West Bengal, brought together officials, scientists, and conservation experts. Discussions focused on conflict causes, compensation measures, and ways to protect elephants and tigers. Minister Yadav stressed science-based management, landscape planning, and community participation. The committee also examined tiger and elephant population studies, habitat use, and conflict hotspots. Future steps include improving management in reserves, evaluating corridors, and strengthening inter-state coordination to ensure safety for both wildlife and local communities.

Manjhi remarks fuel congress recount allegations debate

NEW DELHI

Congress MP Tariq Anwar on Sunday said remarks made by Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi have strengthened the party's long-standing claims about irregularities in the electoral process.

Reacting to Manjhi's comments on vote recounting during the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections, Anwar said the statements themselves have created doubts among voters.

He said people are beginning to believe there is truth in what the Congress has been alleging for years.

The controversy began after a video clip surfaced on social media, where Manjhi was allegedly heard saying he contacted a district magistrate to help a candidate who was

trailing by nearly 2,700 votes during the polls.

Opposition parties, including the Congress, accused the ruling alliance of influencing the election outcome.

Manjhi later rejected the allegations, calling the video misleading.

He clarified that he was only referring to the legal provision of seeking a recount, which is permitted under election rules.

Despite this, Anwar said even the suggestion of contacting officials during elections is worrying.

He added that such incidents weaken public trust and demand closer scrutiny to protect democratic processes.

The Congress leader said transparency and fairness are essential for free elections and urged authorities to ensure accountability so confidence in democracy is not further eroded.

The state launched SSIP 2.0 (2022–2027) to foster youth innovation, offering guidance, mentoring, and Rs 300 crore funding

Gujarat startup ecosystem shines with strong support

GANDHINAGAR

India's Gujarat state has emerged as a strong startup hub, topping the national startup rankings for the fourth straight time. Around 16,700 startups are currently operating across the state, reflecting years of policy support and steady investment.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said startups help young people build businesses and create jobs for others. He noted that programmes like WE-Start and the Student Startup and Innovation Policy support women entrepreneurs and students across Gujarat.

The state government introduced SSIP 2.0 for the period from 2022 to 2027 to build innovation among youth. The policy offers guidance, mentoring, and financial support from school level to higher education. A total budget of Rs 300 crore has been allocated, with Rs 60 crore provided every year.

The Gujarat Startup and Innovation Hub, known as i Hub, has become the backbone of the ecosystem. Its new modern campus was inaugurated in December 2023. The facility offers legal, financial, technical, and operational support through a single window system.

The i Hub campus covers about 1.5 lakh square feet and can host nearly 500 startups at a time. So far, around 620 startups have received direct support. Under the Startup Srujan Seed Support Scheme, more than Rs 23 crore has been given to over 400 startups.

Startups linked to i Hub have created about 1,400 skilled jobs and reached a combined valuation of nearly Rs 3,569 crore. They have also raised over Rs 416 crore in private funding.

Women led startups form nearly 30 percent of supported firms. Four new centres will open in Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot, and Mehsana, strengthening Aatmanirbhar Gujarat goals and long term growth.

TN nurses' demands under review, safety remains priority

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Health Minister Ma Subramanian on Sunday said the state government is actively considering several key demands raised by contract nurses who are protesting across the state. At the same time, he appealed to them to ensure that their agitation does not affect healthcare services or patient safety.

In a statement, the minister said nurses have every right to protest, but such actions must be carried out responsibly. He stressed that protests without prior notice can disrupt hospital services and put lives at risk. He urged both protesters and those supporting them to remember the critical nature of the nursing profession.

Subramanian said many of the protesting nurses were appointed in 2014 during the tenure of former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa. At that time, appointments were made on a contract basis with an assurance of regularisation after two years, depending on seniority and availability of posts. However, he said no regularisation took place for nearly four to five years after that period.

He added that after the DMK government came to power under Chief Minister M K Stalin, regularisation began on a yearly basis. So far, 3,783 nurses have been given permanent appointments. Another 169 nurses are scheduled to receive their appointment orders on Tuesday.

Yogi promotes cooperative banks to support farmers' growth

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday criticised previous state governments for promoting what he called "one district, one mafia" instead of strengthening cooperative institutions. He said his government is now working towards the goal of "one district, one cooperative bank" to support farmers and boost financial inclusion.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Youth Cooperative Conference and UP Cooperative Expo 2025, the Chief Minister said district cooperative banks have seen a major turnaround after 2017. He said these banks now have more than two lakh active accounts and deposits worth around Rs 550 crore.

CM Yogi recalled that before 2017, as many as 16 district cooperative banks were declared defaulters by the Reserve Bank of India. Many of them were close to losing their licences, creating uncertainty for farmers whose savings were locked in these banks.

He said the situation has changed completely. Today, all 50 district cooperative banks in the state are profitable and are contributing to the prosperity of farmers and the economy. The Chief Minister said the banks were suffering from a serious problem earlier, but timely steps taken by the current government helped restore their financial health.

The Chief Minister accused the previous Samajwadi Party government of neglecting the cooperative sector and allowing mafia influence to grow. He said this led to losses for farmers and weakened cooperative banks. According to him, nearly Rs 4,700 crore of farmers' money was recovered and restored after reviving these banks.

CM Yogi said Uttar Pradesh has now moved away from mafia rule and is progressing towards a strong cooperative banking system. He added that this approach will help generate employment and ensure better access to financial services.

Mohan Bhagwat denies RSS has political affiliations

KOLKATA

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said it is a mistake to equate the RSS with any political party, including the Bharatiya Janata Party. He said the Sangh has no political agenda and works only for the unity and welfare of Hindu society.

Speaking at a gathering at Science City auditorium in Kolkata during the centenary celebrations of the RSS, Bhagwat said many people misunderstand the organisation. He said several know the name of the RSS but are unaware of its work and values. According to him, the Sangh does not view anyone as an enemy and does not function with hatred or conflict.

Bhagwat said politics is often wrongly mixed with the image of the RSS. While many leaders of the BJP have been associated with the Sangh, he said this does not mean both organisations are the same. The RSS, he added, focuses only on social unity and strengthening Hindu society.

He said the growth of the RSS may affect groups driven by narrow interests, but the organisation itself does not oppose anyone. To clear misconceptions, the RSS has organised lectures and interaction programmes in four cities across the country to explain its work and vision.

The RSS chief said India has the potential to once again become a "Vishwaguru" or global guide. He said it is the duty of the Sangh to prepare society for this role by reconnecting people with their cultural roots.

POLIO FREE HIMACHAL

CM Sukhu kicks off state-level immunisation campaign

SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Sunday launched the state level Intensified Pulse Polio Campaign from Shimla to mark National Immunisation Day. The campaign aims to administer polio drops to nearly six lakh children across the state.

Children in the age group of zero to five years will be covered during the drive. Polio drops will be given at 5,793 booths set up across Himachal Pradesh. A total of 11,706 teams have been deployed to ensure smooth implementation of the campaign.

Speaking at the launch, the Chief Minister said the state government is continuously strengthening health services from primary health centres to medical colleges. He announced that an advanced pediatric centre will be set up at the Atal Institute of Medical Super Specialities in Chamiyana near Shimla. The centre will offer modern infrastructure and high quality treatment facilities for children.

CM Sukhu also said special OPD slots will be introduced for senior citizens above 70 years so that they can receive treatment without long waiting hours. He added that education and health remain top priorities for the state government.

The Chief Minister said the goal of the polio campaign is to maintain Himachal Pradesh's polio free status. Mop up days will be observed on December 22 and 23. During these days, health workers will conduct door to door visits to cover children who may have missed the vaccine, including those from migrant families and high risk areas.

He said all vaccines, cold chain equipment, and required logistics have already been supplied to districts. The state is also upgrading health infrastructure by replacing old machines and installing new MRI, CT scan, and X ray facilities. Nearly Rs 3,000 crore is being spent on these upgrades.

QUICK READ

CBI seizes cash, gold from WCL official

New Delhi

The CBI seized Rs 17 lakh in cash and 900 grams of gold while registering a case against a Western Coalfields Limited area sales manager in Nagpur and his wife for possessing assets disproportionate to their income. Searches uncovered immovable assets, a house in Mohali, three agricultural lands in Dhanbad, and a luxury vehicle. The case, registered on December 18, estimates total assets at Rs 45.23 lakh. In a separate case, the agency arrested an Army officer and a private individual for alleged bribery in defence exports. Investigations revealed illegal favours and bribe deliveries linked to government departments.

Indian Army celebrates JAG Corps Day

New Delhi

The Indian Army celebrated the 42nd Corps Day of its Judge Advocate General (JAG) Department on Sunday, highlighting its role in upholding military justice, discipline, and the rule of law. The Ministry of Defence shared a podcast featuring Major General Sandeep Kumar explaining JAG's responsibilities, from operational legal advice to emerging warfare domains. Established under the Army Act of 1949, the department advises the Chief of Army Staff and handles disciplinary cases. Earlier this year, the Supreme Court struck down gender-based seat limits in JAG, ruling selection must be merit-based, ensuring equal opportunity for women candidates.

CBI court sentences DRDA officials in scam

New Delhi

A CBI court in Lucknow sentenced three people, including senior DRDA officials, to five years in prison in a Sampurna Grameen Rozgar Yojna (SGRY) corruption case. The convicts—Satyendra Singh Gangwar, Ashok Kumar Upadhyay, and Raghunath Yadav—were also fined Rs 77,000. Investigations revealed misappropriation of over Rs one crore, including cash and foodgrains, intended for rural employment and food security. The case, registered in 2006 and taken over by the CBI in 2008, examined forgery, cheating, and disappearance of records. The verdict highlights accountability in public welfare schemes and sends a strong message against corruption in government programmes.

Delhi CM pledges equal opportunity, safety for women

CM Gupta discussed Delhi's upcoming EV Policy, aiming to boost adoption, cut pollution, and establish the city as a global hub

NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday assured women in the capital that their safety, freedom to work, and equal opportunities remain a top priority for her government. She said every woman should feel confident to pursue her goals while contributing to a developed Delhi.

"Women of Delhi are playing an important role in building a developed city. Our priority is that every woman feels safe, every talent is recognised, and confidence accompanies every step," CM Gupta said in a statement on social media.

As the fourth woman to head Delhi since 1998, she highlighted that women's empowerment is central to the government's mission under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. "There should be freedom to work, assurance to move ahead, and equal opportunities for everyone," she added.

CM Gupta also spoke about the Delhi government's upcoming Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy, set to roll out in the next financial year. The policy aims to encourage EV adoption, reduce pollution, and make Delhi a global EV hub.

The government plans to provide financial incentives, integrate charging infrastructure, and offer subsidies to bridge the cost gap between petrol-diesel and electric vehicles. Road tax and registration fees on EVs have already been waived to make them more affordable.

To further encourage adoption, a 'scrapping incentive' scheme will reward citizens who replace old petrol or diesel vehicles with EVs, helping remove polluting vehicles from Delhi's roads.

CM Gupta said that technology and government support are key to reducing pollution levels, and her administration is committed to ensuring a cleaner, safer, and more inclusive Delhi for all residents, especially women.

BJP-led Mahayuti sweeps Maharashtra local polls

Continued from page 1

Elections spanned 246 municipal councils and 42 nagar panchayats. BJP led 3,120 of 6,859 seats; allies and opposition parties trailed in fewer seats

The BJP-led Mahayuti alliance surged past the 200-mark in Maharashtra's local body elections on Sunday, consolidating its dominance across municipal councils and nagar panchayats, according to trends available by 2.30 p.m.

The elections covered 246 municipal councils and 42 nagar panchayats statewide. The BJP emerged as the frontrunner, leading in 3,120 out of 6,859 seats, while its allies, Shiv Sena and NCP, were ahead in around 600 and 200 seats, respectively. Among opposition parties, Shiv Sena (UBT) led in 145 seats, Congress in 105, and NCP (SP) in 122.

Overall, the Mahayuti alliance was leading in 214 local bodies, while the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) trailed with 52 bodies under its control. Analysts view the results as a key indicator of political influence in Maharashtra's semi-urban and rural regions, nearly a decade after the last local polls.

Despite agrarian distress, partial welfare disbursals, and complaints about financial aid, opposition parties struggled to mount a cohesive challenge. Congress campaigned actively in Vidarbha and Marathwada, but Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) remained largely restricted to their strongholds.

In contrast, the Mahayuti launched an intensive campaign, with Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Ministers personally reaching remote areas. Internal tensions within the alliance were visible, with some Shiv Sena ministers publicly criticising the BJP's approach. Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde reminded the BJP of the importance of alliance cooperation.

The outcome also sets the stage for the upcoming high-stakes Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections next month, highlighting the Mahayuti's continuing political strength in the state.

JD(U) targets Akhilesh over alleged codeine racket

NEW DELHI

The political battle over the alleged Codeine cough syrup racket intensified on Sunday, with JD(U) national spokesperson Rajeev Ranjan Prasad targeting Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav. Prasad accused the SP of making unfounded allegations out of political desperation ahead of the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.

Reacting to Yadav's claims linking the alleged racket to the Prime Minister's parliamentary constituency, Prasad said, "The Samajwadi Party is standing on the verge of a major defeat. This is why it resorts to baseless allegations. Instead of introspection, SP leaders are trying to mislead the public with fabricated narratives."

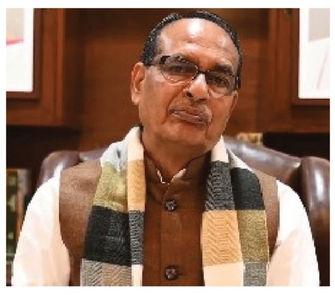
Earlier, Akhilesh Yadav alleged that the illegal Codeine cough syrup trade involved around 700 companies and transactions worth several thousand crores, calling for strict action against those involved regardless of political affiliation.

Prasad dismissed these claims as politicisation of a serious issue, saying selective headlines and imagery cannot replace evidence. He also criticised the Congress party for presenting a narrow view of India's freedom struggle, focusing mainly on Gandhi and Nehru while ignoring other leaders like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Rajendra Prasad, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He alleged that Congress has become a "Gandhi family-centric party" and is attempting to erase its broader historical legacy.

The legislation boosts unemployment benefits, wage delay compensation, and rural development, prioritising welfare under the "Viksit Bharat" initiative.

Chouhan defends VB-G RAM G Bill against criticism

NEW DELHI



Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday criticised opposition leaders for allegedly misleading the public regarding the government's new rural job law, the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025 (VB-G RAM G).

"There is an attempt to mislead the nation in the name of MGNREGA, spreading false information," Chouhan said in a video message. He added that the new Bill is an upgraded version of MGNREGA, guaranteeing 125 days of employment per rural household, up from 100 days under the earlier law.

The legislation strengthens provisions for unemployment allowances, additional compensation for wage delays, and aims to develop self-reliant villages as part of the "Viksit Bharat" initiative. Chouhan emphasised that the Bill prioritises the welfare of the poor and rural development.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi endorsed Chouhan's article explaining the Bill's benefits, describing it as a reform that enhances employment guarantees, local planning, worker security, and convergence of rural schemes. The PM highlighted that the legislation is a modernisation rather than a retreat from social protection.

The VB-G RAM G Bill also focuses on durable asset creation in water security, rural infrastructure, and climate resilience. Technology tools like biometric authentication and real-time monitoring are intended to improve transparency, supported by social audits and grievance redress mechanisms.

Chouhan addressed criticism that the scheme could dilute its demand-driven nature, clarifying that the law explicitly mandates the provision of 125 days of work per rural household. The Bill, set for rollout in April 2026, aligns with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, aiming to deliver enforceable employment rights, accountability, and sustainable rural development.

Booth officers questioned on doubtful West Bengal voter list

KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has decided to seek written explanations from booth-level officers (BLOs) regarding around 1.4 crore doubtful entries in West Bengal's draft voters' list, published on December 16 as part of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

Officials from the Chief Electoral Officer's (CEO) office said BLOs will need to clarify why certain names were recommended for inclusion in the draft and later in the final list, which is scheduled for release on February 14, 2026. The ECI will review these explanations to determine which cases will move forward to hearings on claims and objections, starting from December 27.

The doubtful entries fall into several unusual categories. Some voters, now aged 45 or above, were missing from the 2002 voter list and applied through progeny mapping. "If they were 18 or older in 2002, they should have been enrolled then. Their current registration raises questions," a CEO insider said.

Other cases include individuals listed as fathers at extremely young ages, including an instance of a five-year-old father, and some recorded as grandfathers before turning 40. Additionally, there are entries where the father's and mother's names are identical, further raising concerns about accuracy.

The ECI aims to verify all such cases to ensure a clean voters' list ahead of next year's West Bengal Assembly elections. After the final list is published in February, the poll panel will announce election dates. The commission's careful scrutiny underscores its commitment to transparency and fair elections in the state.

Jharkhand leaders criticise Nitish over hijab incident

RANCHI

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar came under sharp criticism from Jharkhand leaders on Sunday after the hijab controversy involving AYUSH doctor Nusrat Praveen escalated. The incident has drawn nationwide attention, with opposition parties questioning Kumar's conduct and demanding accountability.

Jharkhand Health Minister Irfan Ansari announced that Nusrat Praveen has been offered a job in Jharkhand with a monthly salary of Rs 3 lakh, government accommodation, and posting of her choice. Ansari claimed that the Bihar CM had publicly humiliated the doctor by removing her hijab, calling it an insult to women and the Muslim community.

Supporting Ansari, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) spokesperson Manoj Kumar Pandey described the act as "shameful" and questioned Kumar's fitness to lead. "A Chief Minister publicly insulting a woman is unacceptable. Why is this being ignored?" he asked, urging action against such behaviour.

Congress leader Rakesh Sinha also condemned the incident, stating that it violated the dignity of women. He criticised the BJP-led NDA alliance for consistently displaying such conduct and highlighted the Jharkhand government's offer as a gesture to ensure the doctor's respect and security.

The controversy stems from a December 20 event at the Bihar Chief Minister's Secretariat in Patna, where AYUSH doctors were collecting appointment letters. When Dr. Praveen approached to receive her letter, Nitish Kumar noticed her hijab, asked her to remove it, and lifted it himself. The video quickly circulated, fuelling political debate and nationwide outrage.

The incident has intensified discussions on women's dignity, religious freedom, and political accountability, with opposition parties demanding strict scrutiny and corrective measures in response to the widely shared footage.

TELANGANA MANIFESTO GAP

Kishan Reddy questions Congress over Telangana promises

HYDERABAD

Union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy on Sunday wrote to Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, raising concerns over the alleged non-fulfilment of election promises made by the party in Telangana.

Reddy highlighted that two years after the Congress government assumed power in the state, six key guarantees outlined in the party's 2023 manifesto, Abhayahastam, remain unimplemented. Referring to Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's recent presentation of the Telangana Rising – 2047 Vision Document in Delhi, Reddy questioned whether Sonia Gandhi had reviewed the status of these earlier promises.

"Have the '420 promises' of the election manifesto been thrown into the Musi River, or quietly buried within Gandhi Bhavan? The people of Telangana deserve a clear and honest answer," he asked in the letter. He alleged that instead of honouring its commitments, the Telangana government "appears to be misleading the people" by introducing new narratives through vision documents while ignoring earlier guarantees.

Reddy warned that the failure to deliver on promises could turn public goodwill into anger, likening the unfulfilled Abhayahastam to a "Bhasmasura Hasta (hand of destruction)". He urged the Congress leadership to clarify its stance on commitments made to farmers, women, unemployed youth, students, Dalits, tribals, and backward classes.

Stressing the importance of accountability, the Union Minister added that new visions should not come at the cost of unfulfilled guarantees and that the people of Telangana are "watching and waiting" for clarity from the party.

DMK accelerates second phase of KKI housing scheme

CHENNAI

As Tamil Nadu gears up for the 2026 Assembly elections, the DMK government is fast-tracking the second phase of its flagship Kalaignar Kanavu Illam (KKI) housing scheme. This Rs 3,500-crore initiative aims to replace huts with permanent homes across rural areas.

Officials said construction is nearing completion, with 25,657 families already settled in new houses and 74,343 units almost ready. The administration has set an ambitious target to deliver all remaining homes by the first week of February 2026.

"The second phase will be fully delivered by early February," confirmed a senior official from the panchayat raj and rural development department. Weekly progress reviews by Chief Secretary N. Muruganandam and Principal Secretary Gagandeep Singh Bedi highlight the project's priority status in the government's welfare agenda.

Launched in March 2024, KKI aims to achieve a 'hut-free Tamil Nadu' by 2030. Government surveys earlier identified nearly eight lakh huts statewide, emphasizing the housing deficit the scheme targets.

A unique feature of KKI is its beneficiary-led construction model. Families receive funds in four instalments, allowing them to hire workers and supervise construction. Each household is provided Rs 3.5 lakh, reducing delays and improving quality.

Demand is especially high in northern districts such as Tiruvannamalai, Cuddalore, Villupuram, and the delta region. Meeting the February target will see one lakh homes completed in phase two alone, bringing total beneficiaries to around two lakh since the scheme began.

QUICK READ

US seizes second oil tanker off Venezuela

Venezuela

The United States has been warned against risking a "humanitarian catastrophe" in Venezuela following the seizure of another oil tanker linked to the sanctioned South American nation. Critics argue that Washington's aggressive enforcement of sanctions could further cripple Venezuela's already fragile economy and worsen living conditions for millions of civilians. The operation was confirmed by Kristi Noem, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, who announced the seizure in a post on X. According to Noem, the tanker had last docked in Venezuela and was allegedly involved in transporting sanctioned oil. "The United States will continue to pursue the illicit movement of sanctioned oil that is used to fund narco terrorism in the region.

Philippines extends sugar import ban until December 2026

Manila

The Philippines' Department of Agriculture on Sunday said the ban on sugar importation will remain in place until December next year, extending protection for local producers amid improving supply conditions. "Based on the current outlook for sugar production and demand, a longer import moratorium than initially suggested is necessary," Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said. He cited stronger domestic raw sugar output and emphasised that the policy is intended to prioritise locally produced sugar while helping stabilise the market. As chair of the Sugar Board, the policymaking body of the Sugar Regulatory Administration, Tiu Laurel said the agency will intensify monitoring of refinery operations to maintain an accurate picture of standard and premium-grade refined sugar inventories.

S. Korea, Russia hold talks in Moscow on N. Korean nuclear

South Korea and Russia resumed sensitive diplomacy in Moscow, discussing North Korea's nuclear programme amid shifting regional dynamics

SEOUL

South Korea and Russia have recently conducted closed-door talks in Moscow focusing on North Korea's nuclear programme and broader regional security concerns, diplomatic sources revealed on Sunday. The discussions mark a cautious but notable resumption of engagement between Seoul and Moscow at a time of heightened geopolitical tension in Northeast Asia and beyond.

According to the sources, a senior official from South Korea's Foreign Ministry responsible for North Korean nuclear affairs travelled to Moscow for meetings with Oleg Burmistrov, Russia's Ambassador-at-large for the North Korean nuclear issue, along with other Russian officials. The development was

first reported by Yonhap News Agency. During the talks, the South Korean side reportedly urged Russia to play a constructive and stabilising role in promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Seoul is understood to be exploring options to reopen dialogue with North Korea in the coming year, while also factoring in ongoing international efforts to bring an end to the war in Ukraine. Given Russia's increasingly close political and military ties with Pyongyang, South Korea believes Moscow could exert meaningful influence in encouraging North Korea's return to diplomatic talks.

The recent meeting is particularly significant as it represents the first working-level engagement on the North Korean nuclear issue between South Korea and Russia since October 2024. Bilateral relations had deteriorated sharply following North Korea's deployment of troops to support Russia in the Ukraine conflict, a move that raised serious security concerns in Seoul.

Diplomatic sources indicated that South Korea also used the Moscow talks to express its apprehension over expanding military cooperation between Russia and North Korea. Seoul views such cooperation as a direct threat to stability on the Korean Peninsula and the wider region.

Imran Khan calls for protests after 17-year jail sentence

LAHORE

Jailed former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has called for nationwide protests and announced plans to challenge the court's verdict in the Toshakhana-II case before the Islamabad High Court, according to local media reports on Sunday. His statement came a day after a Pakistani court sentenced him and his wife, Bushra Bibi, to 17 years in prison in connection with the corruption case.

Imran Khan, the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), does not have direct access to his social media accounts while incarcerated. His message, however, was conveyed through his lawyer and later shared on X. As reported by Dawn, Khan said he had instructed Sohail Afridi to prepare for a street movement, asserting that "the entire nation will have to rise for its rights."

Reacting to the verdict, Khan said the court's decision did not come as a surprise, claiming it followed a pattern of what he described as "baseless decisions" over the past three years. He alleged that the Toshakhana-II ruling was delivered in haste, without evidence, and without fulfilling legal requirements. According to him, his legal team was "not even heard" before the sentence was pronounced.

The former premier also urged the Insaf Lawyers Forum and the broader legal community to take a leading role in what he termed the fight for the supremacy of law and the restoration of the Constitution. In a strongly worded statement, PTI condemned the judgment as "blatantly unconstitutional, illegal, malicious," and described it as a clear case of political victimisation.

Jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan urged nationwide protests while announcing a legal challenge against his conviction.

The Toshakhana-II case centres on the alleged purchase of an expensive jewellery set that was gifted to Imran Khan by the Saudi Crown Prince during an official visit in May 2021. Investigators claim the gift was acquired at a nominal price, raising corruption allegations.

The verdict was delivered by Judge Central Shahrukh Arjumand of the Federal Investigation Agency's special court during proceedings held inside Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, where Khan is currently imprisoned. Under the ruling, Imran Khan received a cumulative sentence of 17 years, including 10 years of rigorous imprisonment under multiple sections of the Pakistan Penal Code and an additional seven years under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

A Seoul court has upheld the Justice Ministry's refusal to grant citizenship, citing criminal history concerns

Seoul Court upholds denial of naturalization to foreign national

SEOUL

A Seoul court has upheld an earlier decision by South Korea's Justice Ministry to deny naturalisation to a foreign national due to his past criminal record, reinforcing the government's strict interpretation of citizenship eligibility standards.

According to legal sources on Sunday, the Seoul Administrative Court dismissed a lawsuit filed by the applicant, who had sought to overturn the Justice Ministry's rejection of his naturalisation request. The foreigner, whose nationality was not disclosed, had initially applied for South Korean citizenship after marrying a South Korean national. However, following the couple's divorce, the legal basis of his application changed, prompting the ministry to reassess his eligibility.

As reported by Yonhap News Agency, the Justice Ministry ultimately rejected the application, concluding that the individual failed to satisfy the "good conduct" requirement stipulated under the Nationality Act. The applicant had previously been referred to juvenile protection proceedings for aggravated theft and was also fined for driving without a valid license.

In court, the applicant argued that the ministry's decision was excessively harsh, maintaining that his past offences should not permanently bar him from acquiring South Korean nationality. However, the administrative court ruled that the individual was a repeat offender over an extended period and that his offences could not be considered minor in nature.

The court further noted that the applicant had failed to disclose his full criminal history at the time of applying for naturalisation, a factor that weighed heavily against him in the legal assessment. Judges concluded that the Justice Ministry had acted within its discretionary authority and that its decision was neither excessive nor unreasonable.

Importantly, the court clarified that the ruling does not require the foreigner to leave the country. He is still permitted to remain in South Korea under his F-6 marriage migrant visa and may reapply for naturalisation at a later stage if circumstances change and legal requirements are met.

Nine killed in 'random' mass shooting in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG

At least nine people were killed, and several others sustained injuries after armed assailants opened fire indiscriminately in South Africa's West Rand region, local media reported on Sunday, citing police officials. According to police spokesperson Brigadier Athlenda Mathe, the shooting took place at the KwaNoxolo Tavern in the Tambo section of Bekkersdal in West Rand, local media outlet. Mathe said that in addition to those targeted at the tavern, some of the victims were shot at random while they were on the street by unidentified gunmen. The incident occurred in a township located near Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city and its main economic centre. Gauteng Acting Police Commissioner Fred Kekana said authorities had launched a full-scale investigation into the incident.

Portugal open to peacekeeping role in Ukraine after war

KYIV

Portuguese Prime Minister Luis Montenegro on Saturday said his country has not ruled out participating in a future peacekeeping mission in Ukraine once the ongoing conflict with Russia comes to an end. However, he stressed that no such mission is currently under active planning.

Speaking at a joint press conference in Kyiv with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Montenegro said Portugal does not intend to take part in wartime operations but remains committed to supporting international peace efforts. "We do not want to be here during a war, but in the Coalition of the Willing, Portugal participates and will participate in peacekeeping operations," he said, according to Xinhua News Agency, citing Interfax-Ukraine.

Portugal is part of the so-called Coalition of the Willing, a grouping of around 30 countries that have pledged political, military, and economic support to Ukraine since the start of the conflict. Montenegro noted that Portugal is already contributing to Ukraine's defence capabilities by supporting the development of underwater drone technology.

President Zelensky confirmed that Ukraine and Portugal have signed a bilateral partnership agreement focused on the joint production of underwater drones, marking a deepening of defence and technological cooperation between the two countries. Montenegro arrived in Kyiv earlier on Saturday as part of his official visit aimed at reinforcing diplomatic and strategic ties.

S.Korea eyes nuclear-powered submarines with US backing

GEOJE

South Korea is pushing to enter the exclusive group of nations operating nuclear-powered submarines, a move that could significantly reshape the security landscape of Northeast Asia. The ambition has received a crucial political signal from Donald Trump, who has given his blessing to Seoul's aspirations, according to analysts and officials familiar with the discussions. If realised, South Korea would become the seventh country in the world to operate nuclear-powered submarines, joining an elite group that currently includes the United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, and India. Such submarines are prized for their ability to remain submerged for extended periods, travel long distances without refuelling.

Situation deteriorates after election date announced

DHAKA

The law and order situation in Bangladesh has worsened since the announcement of the schedule for national parliamentary elections set to be held next year, sparking concerns among people regarding their safety, local media reported on Sunday. Political events, counter-rallies, clashes, arson attacks, and killings have increased in recent days, sparking concerns that the election environment is becoming very volatile.

Observers said tensions related to elections after the announcement of the schedule are not new in Bangladesh. However, they stressed that the current situation is more alarming than in previous polls.

Radical organisation Inqilab Mancha spokesperson and a potential candidate for the Dhaka-8 constituency,

Sharif Osman Hadi, was shot in Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka. After receiving initial treatment in Bangladesh, he was taken to Singapore, where he died on December 18. After Hadi's death, protests and violent incidents erupted in Bangladesh. Houses of several Awami League leaders and activists were targeted in Bangladesh. Offices of media outlets and cultural institutions were targeted in Bangladesh. In addition to politically linked violence, brutal crimes have also increased in Bangladesh, sparking concerns among people.

Md Touhidul Haque, associate professor and criminologist at the Institute of Social Welfare and Research, Dhaka University, termed the worsening law and order situation in Bangladesh as deeply concerning. "Political differences and ideological conflicts are normal. But when these are exploited to justify violence, arson and killings, election-time stability is seriously threatened," he said.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

7		8			1		3	
1	4				3		5	
	5		9				1	7
6		5		8			7	
8			6		5		4	9
	9		3		1		6	
5		3		9	7		2	6
	1	6	5		4		8	
2		4		3		5		1

7	5	9	4	6	2	3	8	1
6	4	3	1	7	8	9	2	5
2	1	8	5	9	3	4	6	7
8	7	1	6	2	4	5	9	3
9	2	4	7	3	5	8	1	6
5	3	6	8	1	9	7	4	2
3	9	7	2	4	6	1	5	8
1	8	2	9	5	7	6	3	4
4	6	5	3	8	1	2	7	9

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

BANNU POLICE AMBUSH

Police vehicle ambushed near Afghan refugee camp

ISLAMABAD

A police vehicle was targeted in a planned ambush near an Afghan refugee camp on Kohat Road in Bannu district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, prompting authorities to order the evacuation of the settlement on security grounds, local media reported on Sunday.

According to police officials, the attack occurred when Deputy Superintendent of Police Mufeez Khan was travelling from Township to Domel. Assailants allegedly hiding near the refugee camp opened fire on his vehicle in what officials described as a coordinated and pre-planned ambush. The incident was reported by The Express Tribune.

Police personnel accompanying the officer returned fire; however, the attackers managed to flee the scene. No casualties were reported in the incident, though the police vehicle sustained partial damage. Following the attack, security forces immediately cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to track down the suspects involved.

District administration officials said the Afghan refugee camp housed around 2,567 people. Prior to Saturday's attack, approximately 1,700 residents had already been deported to Afghanistan as part of an ongoing repatriation drive. In the aftermath of the ambush, authorities deported an additional 120 individuals belonging to 20 families. Heavy machinery has since been deployed to dismantle structures within the camp as evacuation efforts continue.

The incident adds to a string of recent attacks targeting police in the region. On December 8, a policeman was injured after assailants opened sniper fire on the Ahmadzai police station in Bannu district, according to Dawn. Earlier, on December 3, three police personnel were killed when an improvised explosive device struck a police vehicle in the Paniyala area of Dera Ismail Khan.

QUICK READ

SK Telecom faces compensation after April data breach

Seoul

South Korea's consumer agency has ruled that SK Telecom must pay 100,000 won ($67) to each user after a huge data breach affected 23 million people. The Korea Consumer Agency acted after 58 users filed complaints earlier this year. The breach, revealed in April, exposed subscribers' USIM data, leading SK Telecom to replace SIM cards and triggering a major investigation. In August, regulators fined the company 134.8 billion won. Users will receive 50,000 won in subscription discounts and 50,000 won in credits. SK Telecom said it will carefully review the decision.

UltraTech Cement faces massive GST tax demand

Mumbai

UltraTech Cement has been asked to pay about Rs 390 crore in alleged GST dues, along with a similar penalty and Rs 28 lakh interest. The demand from the Joint Commissioner of Central GST and Excise, Patna, relates to the 2018-19 to 2022-23 period and claims short payment and improper use of input tax credits. The total liability equals nearly two-thirds of the company's recent quarterly profit of Rs 1,232 crore. UltraTech said it plans to challenge the order and does not expect it to affect operations. Revenue rose 20.3% this quarter.

Musk edges closer to becoming world's first trillionaire

New Delhi

Elon Musk's fortune has soared to nearly $750 billion after a US court restored his 2018 Tesla stock options worth $139 billion. The Delaware Supreme Court overturned a lower court's decision that had canceled the pay package, calling the earlier ruling unfair. If Musk exercises all options, his Tesla stake could rise from 12.4% to 18.1%. With SpaceX likely going public next year, valuing the company up to $1.5 trillion, and his 53% stake in xAI Holdings worth $60 billion, Musk edges closer to becoming the world's first trillionaire.

GeM empowers small sellers with massive orders

Micro and small enterprises now hold 44.8% of platform orders, surpassing the 25% target, reflecting trust and better access

NEW DELHI

The Government e-Marketplace has become a strong support system for small businesses across India, with over 11.25 lakh micro and small enterprises securing government orders worth Rs 7.44 lakh crore so far. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry shared this information on Sunday, highlighting GeM's growing role in public procurement.

Official data shows that micro and small enterprises now account for 44.8 percent of the total order value on the platform. This is well above the mandatory target of 25 percent set for government procurement from small firms. Officials said this reflects rising trust in the digital system and better access for smaller players.

GeM has helped remove traditional barriers related to size, location, and reach. Small businesses from different parts of the country can now directly compete for government contracts. Suppliers from sectors such as clean energy, manufacturing, and technology services are increasingly winning high value orders.

Women entrepreneurs have also seen strong growth on the platform. More than two lakh women owned MSEs are active on GeM and together they have secured government orders worth over Rs 78,000 crore. Their participation is supported through special initiatives like Womaniya, which focus on training, onboarding, and awareness.

The platform also supports SC and ST owned enterprises and startups by offering equal visibility and fair competition. Buyers can easily identify products and services from eligible MSEs using special filters. Qualified sellers receive benefits such as purchase preference and relaxations in deposits and experience norms.

Beyond sales, GeM has improved transparency and speed in government buying. It allows small firms from remote regions to access opportunities that were once difficult to reach. Officials said the platform is helping make public spending more inclusive and efficient nationwide.

Philippines keeps sugar import ban amid rising production

MANILA

The Philippines has decided to extend its ban on sugar imports until December 2026 to protect local farmers and producers. The Department of Agriculture said the move comes as domestic sugar supply continues to improve across the country. Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said the longer ban is needed after reviewing current production levels and market demand.

He explained that local raw sugar output has shown steady growth, making imports less necessary at this stage. The policy aims to give priority to locally produced sugar while keeping market prices stable for consumers and businesses. Officials believe this step will help farmers earn fair returns for their crops.

As head of the Sugar Board, Tiu Laurel said stricter monitoring of sugar refineries will be carried out. This will help authorities track stocks of both regular and premium refined sugar and prevent sudden shortages or price changes. The government said close oversight is key to managing supply effectively.

Tiu Laurel, Sugar Board head, announced stricter monitoring of sugar refineries to track stocks, prevent shortages or price changes, and ensure effective government supply management

Meanwhile, recent data showed positive signs in the broader manufacturing sector. The Philippine Statistics Authority reported that manufacturing output rose in October. The value of production index increased by 1.7 percent from a year earlier, while the volume of production index grew by 1.4 percent.

Strong growth in computer, electronic, and optical products led the increase. Food and pharmaceutical production also supported overall manufacturing performance. Officials said these trends show improving industrial activity.

The government said the sugar import ban supports local agriculture and economic stability. Regular reviews will continue to ensure enough supply while protecting both farmers and consumers nationwide going forward.

Indian startup funding sees sharp weekly surge

NEW DELHI

Indian startups recorded a strong rise in funding last week, with investments jumping nearly 2.6 times compared to the previous week. A total of 30 startups raised about 364 million dollars through a mix of early and growth stage deals, showing renewed investor confidence.

In the previous week, 22 startups had raised close to 138 million dollars, making the latest numbers a clear improvement. Growth and late stage funding dominated, crossing the 300 million dollar mark through nine major deals.

The biggest investment went to customer engagement platform MoEngage, which secured an additional 180 million dollars as part of its Series F round. The funding came from ChrysCapital, Dragon Funds, and Schroders Capital. Spacetech startup Digantara followed with a 50 million dollar raise. Electric commercial vehicle maker Qucev raised 15 million dollars, while stock market learning platform StockGro secured 13 million dollars. Other startups such as WorkIndia, Oben Electric, Tagbin, Virohan, and Ace Turtle also attracted fresh capital during the week.

Early stage startups raised around 62.4 million dollars across 20 deals. Haircare brand Moxie Beauty raised 15 million dollars in a Series A round led by Bessemer Venture Partners. Shapewear brand Underneat secured 6 million dollars in a pre Series A round led by Fireside Ventures.

The association anticipates new CBG plants, improved raw material supply chains, and unified policies to accelerate adoption across states

Biogas investments may cross Rs 5000 crore in FY27

NEW DELHI

India's biogas sector is expected to attract investments worth more than Rs 5,000 crore during the financial year 2026–27, driven by rising demand for cleaner gas and supportive government policies. The Indian Biogas Association said growing interest from investors reflects the sector's strong future potential.

Government data shows that 94 compressed biogas plants sold over 31,400 tonnes of CBG during 2024–25. This steady rise in sales highlights increasing acceptance of biogas as a reliable energy source. Industry experts believe the coming years will see faster growth as more plants become operational.

The association expects several new CBG plants to be commissioned, supported by better supply chains for raw materials such as farm waste and organic refuse. Clear and unified policies are also expected to help speed up adoption across states.

There is also major scope to improve efficiency in millions of small traditional biogas units already operating in rural areas. Support for medium-sized plants is increasing, as they provide clean cooking fuel, create rural jobs, and produce organic manure for farmers.

IBA Chairman Gaurav Kedia said recent tax changes will improve ease of doing business. He said a seven percent reduction in GST could make projects more viable and may raise new investments by around 45 percent in the short to medium term. He added that the wider economic impact across the value chain would be even larger.

Compressed biogas is made from organic waste such as crop residue, dung, and sewage. After purification, it matches natural gas quality. It plays an important role in cutting oil imports, reducing pollution, managing waste, and strengthening rural incomes.

The government supports the sector through financial assistance covering part of project costs. Additional incentives are offered for organic fertiliser sales and pipeline connections, further encouraging investment and long-term growth.

Govt e-Marketplace earns Rs 2200 crore via auctions

NEW DELHI

The government's e-Marketplace platform has helped earn more than Rs 2,200 crore by selling e-waste and scrap through online auctions. The Commerce and Industry Ministry said this amount was raised between December 2021 and November 2025 using GeM's forward auction system.

During this four-year period, over 13,000 auctions were conducted on the platform. More than 23,000 registered bidders took part, while over 17,000 auctioneers from various government bodies participated. Officials said these numbers show that digital auctions have become a regular nationwide system rather than a trial effort.

Several examples highlight the success of this process. In Lucknow, the State Bank of India auctioned 100 EWS flats through GeM and earned Rs 34.53 crore. SBI later praised the transparent and smooth handling of the auction by the GeM team.

The National Zoological Park in New Delhi also benefited from the platform. The zoo had long struggled to dispose of unusable items. Through a forward auction, it received bids higher than the reserve price and expressed satisfaction with the support provided.

A wide range of assets has been sold through GeM. These include gypsum worth Rs 3.35 crore, condemned vehicles in Jammu, salvage items from the Border Roads Organisation, a dormitory lease in Gulmarg, and boating rights at a lake in Spurtar.

GeM is mainly used by government departments to buy goods and services. It also helps sell old assets through online bidding. Officials said this system improves transparency, efficiency, and value for public resources.

India emerges strongest real estate market in Asia-Pacific region

NEW DELHI

India is emerging as one of the most resilient real estate markets in the Asia-Pacific region despite global economic uncertainty, according to a new report released on Sunday. While several property markets across the region face slower growth and cautious investor sentiment, India continues to show strength driven by solid domestic fundamentals.

The Asia-Pacific Outlook 2026 report by Knight Frank said India benefits from a large skilled workforce, stable regulations, and a steadily maturing real estate ecosystem. Even as regional growth is expected to moderate due to changing trade policies and tighter capital flows, India's property sector is likely to remain stable with steady demand.

The report highlighted that India enters 2026 with one of the strongest office market outlooks in Asia-Pacific. Growth in global capability centres, continued hiring in the technology sector, and strong confidence among occupiers helped India record one of the highest office leasing volumes in the region during 2025.

Major cities such as Bengaluru, Mumbai, and the National Capital Region continue to lead office demand. Office rentals in these cities are expected to rise between 7.5 percent and 9 percent on a yearly basis in 2026. India also crossed a key milestone in 2025, with Grade A office space in its top eight cities crossing one billion square feet.

RIVER ENERGY RISE

NHPC announces commercial operations of Subansiri Lower Unit

NEW DELHI

State-owned power producer NHPC announced on Sunday that it will start commercial operations of the second unit of the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project from December 23. The second unit has a generation capacity of 250 megawatts and will begin producing electricity from midnight on December 23, 2025.

NHPC said the project is being developed at an estimated cost of about Rs 27,000 crore under the Ministry of Power. The Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project is located at Gerukamukh near North Lakhimpur on the border of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. NHPC confirmed that the unit was declared commercially operational after the successful completion of its trial run.

The remaining units of the project will be commissioned in phases and their commercial operation dates will be shared later. Once completed, the Subansiri project will become India's largest hydroelectric power station with a total capacity of 2,000 megawatts. It consists of eight units of 250 megawatts each and follows a run-of-the-river design.

NHPC said this design allows power generation while reducing environmental impact compared to large reservoir projects. NHPC Director Projects Sanjay Kumar Singh visited the site to review progress and oversee preparations. He inspected the dam spillway and tunnels and discussed pending work with officials and contractors.

Earlier this month the first unit was connected to the national power grid indicating steady progress toward full operations. NHPC expects the project to generate over 7,421 million units of electricity annually. The electricity will support regional growth strengthen energy security and help meet rising power demand across northeastern India in coming years ahead.

Railways to collect extra Rs 600 cr revenue

NEW DELHI

Indian Railways will increase passenger fares from December 26 to generate about Rs 600 crore in extra revenue, the Ministry of Railways said on Sunday.

Under the revised structure, passengers travelling beyond 215 kilometres in Ordinary Class will pay one paisa more per kilometre. Those using Mail and Express trains, including non AC and AC classes, will pay an additional two paise per kilometre. A non AC journey of 500 kilometres will therefore cost about Rs 10 more. There will be no fare increase for trips shorter than 215 kilometres.

The railways also confirmed that suburban tickets and monthly season passes will remain unchanged. This decision aims to protect daily commuters and low and middle income families from higher travel costs. The ministry said operating expenses have risen sharply in recent years as the rail network expanded across the country. Manpower costs have climbed to Rs 1,15,000 crore, while pension payments now stand at Rs 60,000 crore. Overall operating costs touched Rs 2,63,000 crore in 2024 25.

To manage these costs, Indian Railways is focusing on higher freight movement along with limited passenger fare adjustment. Officials said safety spending and better operations have led to major improvements. India is now the world's second largest railway for cargo movement.

Freight rates have not been revised since 2018 despite rising input costs. Instead, the railways increased earnings by carrying more goods. During the recent festival season, more than 12,000 additional trains were successfully operated.

The ministry also said construction work on the high speed bullet train project in Maharashtra is progressing well, with land acquisition now fully completed. Officials expect service improvements.

High-Rise Culture in India: Reaching for the Sky

Economic Drivers behind the Vertical Surge

Multiple economic factors converge to make high-rise construction attractive in contemporary India. Foremost among these is the acute scarcity of urban land.

As cities absorb millions of rural migrants seeking employment opportunities, the demand for housing intensifies dramatically. With horizontal expansion limited by geographical constraints, agricultural land preservation concerns, and infrastructural challenges, building upward presents the most logical solution.

The economics of land appreciation further incentivize vertical development. In prime urban locations, land costs can account for 60-70% of total project costs. Developers maximize returns by constructing tall buildings that house more units on the same plot, distributing the astronomical land costs across multiple buyers. This approach makes urban living somewhat more accessible to middle-income families, though affordability remains a pressing concern.

Additionally, high-rise buildings align with the aspirations of India's growing affluent class. These towers often feature amenities previously associated with luxury hotels—swimming pools, gymnasiums, landscaped gardens, clubhouses, and security systems. For upwardly mobile professionals, owning an apartment in a prestigious high-rise symbolizes success and social mobility. Real estate marketing capitalizes on these aspirations, positioning high-rise living as sophisticated, modern, and globally aligned.

THE GENESIS OF VERTICAL GROWTH

India's romance with high-rise buildings began in earnest during the mid-20th century, though the seeds were planted much earlier. Mumbai, the financial capital, led this vertical revolution out of sheer necessity. Constrained by geography—squeezed between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats—the city had nowhere to expand but upward. The iconic Art Deco buildings along Marine Drive, constructed in the 1930s and 1940s, represented early experiments with vertical living that would eventually define Mumbai's character. However, the real boom in high-rise construction commenced in the 1990s following India's economic liberalization. As the economy opened up, foreign investment flowed in, incomes rose, and a burgeoning middle class emerged with new housing aspirations. Real estate developers recognized the potential of vertical construction to maximize land use in increasingly expensive urban markets. Cities like Delhi, Bangalore, Pune, and Hyderabad witnessed rapid proliferation of apartment towers, fundamentally altering their architectural DNA. The 21st century accelerated this trend exponentially.

Improved construction technologies, relaxed height restrictions in many cities, and sophisticated financial instruments made high-rise development both feasible and profitable.

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND LIFESTYLE SHIFTS

The shift toward high-rise living has catalysed profound social changes in Indian urban society. Traditional joint family structures, once housed in sprawling ancestral homes, increasingly fragment into nuclear families inhabiting compact apartments. This architectural transition accompanies broader societal shifts toward individualism, privacy, and autonomy.

High-rise communities foster new forms of social interaction. Unlike traditional neighborhoods where residents knew each other intimately through daily encounters in streets and markets, high-rise dwellers often experience more anonymous forms of community.

Elevator conversations and residents' association meetings replace the courtyard gatherings and street-corner chats of traditional settlements.

While some lament this loss of organic community, others appreciate the privacy and selective sociability that apartment living affords.

The demographic composition of high-rise residents skews toward young professionals, dual-income couples, and small families. These residents typically prioritize convenience, security, and modern amenities over space and traditional community structures.

The culture within these towers tends to be cosmopolitan, with residents from diverse regional, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds coexisting in relative anonymity—a microcosm of India's urban diversity.

Women's experiences of urban space have also transformed with high-rise living.

The enclosed, secured environment of apartment complexes offers perceived safety advantages, though this comes at the cost of reduced engagement with the broader neighborhood. Children growing up in high-rises experience childhood differently than previous generations, with supervised play areas replacing spontaneous street games and vertical isolation limiting their spatial exploration.

Architectural and Urban Planning Challenges

India's rapid vertical expansion has outpaced urban planning capacity in many cities, creating significant challenges. Infrastructure strain represents the most visible problem. High-rise clusters concentrate populations in limited areas, overwhelming existing water supply, sewage systems, electricity grids, and transportation networks. Many cities experience chronic water shortages, power cuts, and traffic congestion—problems exacerbated by unplanned vertical growth.

The environmental footprint of high-rise construction raises sustainability concerns. These buildings consume enormous quantities of concrete, steel, and energy during construction and operation. Air conditioning requirements for sealed glass facades increase energy consumption dramatically, often straining local power grids. Many high-rises rely heavily on groundwater extraction, depleting aquifers and causing land subsidence in some areas.

Fire safety emerges as another critical concern. India's rapid vertical growth has frequently outstripped the development of adequate fire safety infrastructure and enforcement mechanisms. Many cities lack sufficient firefighting equipment capable of reaching upper floors of tall buildings. Inadequate emergency exits, non-functional fire suppression systems, and blocked evacuation routes pose serious risks, as occasional fire incidents tragically demonstrate.

The urban heat island effect intensifies with dense clusters of high-rises. Concrete and glass structures absorb and radiate heat, while reduced vegetation and air circulation create uncomfortably hot microclimates. This phenomenon particularly affects Indian cities during summer months, increasing cooling demands and creating public health concerns.

Regional Variations in High-Rise Adoption

High-rise culture manifests differently across India's diverse urban landscape. Mumbai remains the undisputed leader, with the highest concentration of residential towers and the tallest buildings. The city's constrained geography and astronomical real estate prices make vertical construction virtually inevitable. Neighborhoods like Lower Parel, Worli, and Bandra-Kurla Complex showcase dramatic skylines that rival global cities.

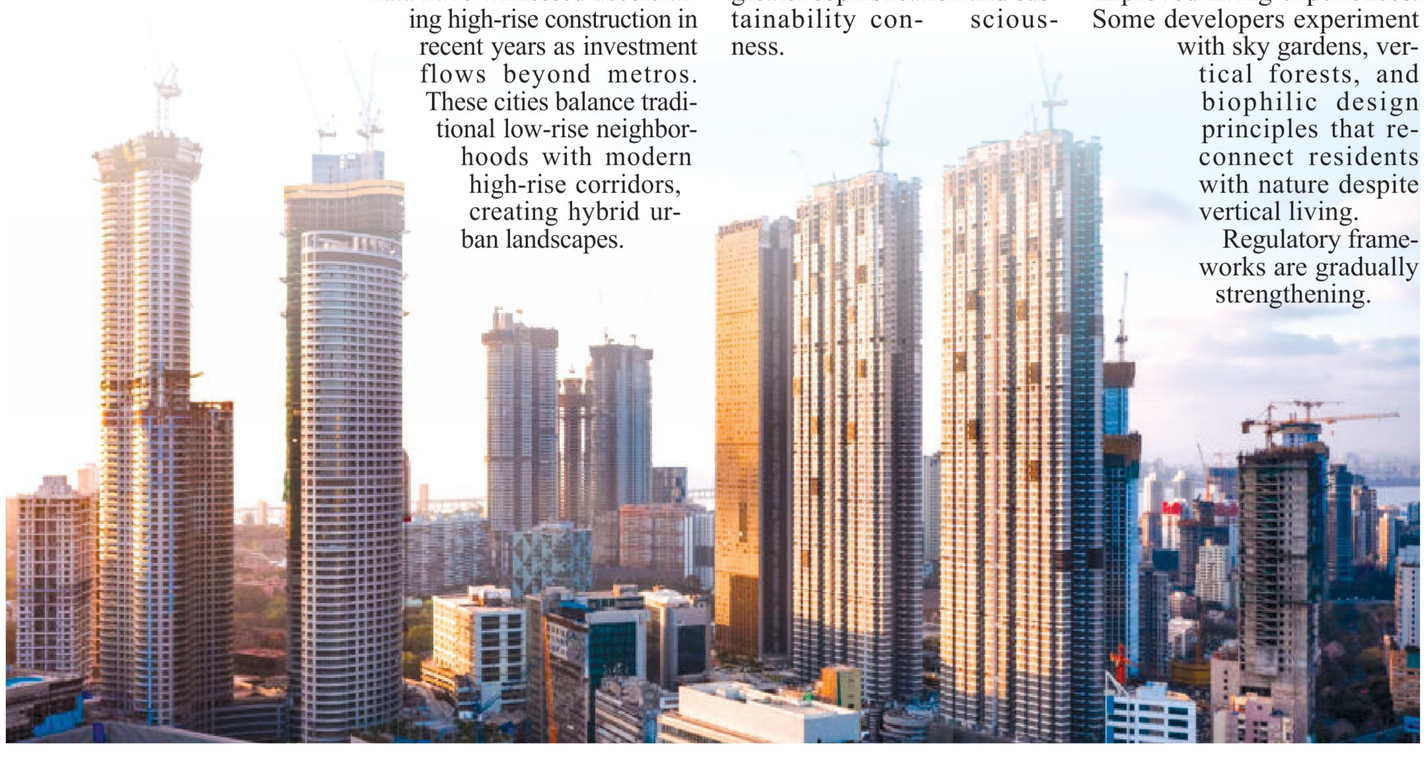
Bangalore and Hyderabad, India's technology hubs, have embraced high-rise development enthusiastically. These cities attract young professionals from across India and abroad, creating demand for modern apartment living. Tech corridors like Bangalore's Whitefield and Hyderabad's HITEC City feature clusters of residential towers designed to accommodate the industry's workforce. Delhi and its satellite cities present a different pattern. While Gurgaon and Noida have extensive high-rise development, Delhi proper features more mid-rise construction due to historical preservation concerns and regulatory restrictions in certain areas. The National Capital Region nonetheless contains thousands of apartment towers serving its massive population. Tier-2 cities like Pune, Ahmedabad, Chennai, and Kolkata have witnessed accelerating high-rise construction in recent years as investment flows beyond metros. These cities balance traditional low-rise neighborhoods with modern high-rise corridors, creating hybrid urban landscapes.

THE FUTURE TRAJECTORY

India's high-rise culture shows no signs of slowing. With urban populations projected to increase by hundreds of millions over coming decades, vertical construction will remain essential to accommodating growth. However, the trajectory is evolving toward greater sophistication and sustainability consciousness.

Green building certifications like LEED and IGBC are gaining traction, with developers incorporating energy-efficient designs, renewable energy systems, rainwater harvesting, and waste management solutions. Smart building technologies promise better resource management and improved living experiences. Some developers experiment with sky gardens, vertical forests, and biophilic design principles that reconnect residents with nature despite vertical living.

Regulatory frameworks are gradually strengthening.



PAKISTAN U-19 BEAT INDIA TO WIN ASIA CUP FINAL

Pak Under-19s crushed India by 191 runs in Dubai to clinch the Asia Cup title

DUBAI

Pakistan's Under-19 cricket team produced a clinical all-round display to defeat India by a massive 191 runs in the final of the Under-19 Asia Cup, played in Dubai on Sunday. The emphatic victory underlined Pakistan's dominance throughout the tournament and marked a memorable triumph for the young side on a big stage.

Chasing a daunting target of 348 runs, the India Under-19 cricket team struggled from the outset and were bowled out for just 156 in 26.2 overs. Pakistan's bowlers applied relentless pressure, striking at regular intervals and never allowing the Indian batters to settle. The steep required run rate further compounded India's problems, resulting in one of the most lopsided finals in the history of the competition.

Earlier, after being put in to bat, the Pakistan Under-19 cricket team posted an imposing total of 347 for eight in their allotted 50 overs. Pakistan's innings was built on disciplined batting, effective partnerships, and a strong finish in the death overs. The batters capitalised on loose deliveries while also rotating the strike efficiently, ensuring constant scoreboard pressure on the Indian side.

A standout performer of the match was Sameer Minhas, who was adjudged both the Player of the Match and the Player of the Tournament. His consistent performances with the bat throughout the competition played a crucial role in Pakistan's successful campaign.

Minhas' composure, shot selection, and ability to rise to the occasion in high-pressure matches earned him widespread praise from cricket experts and fans alike.

Pakistan's bowlers complemented the strong batting effort with disciplined lines and lengths, exploiting any assistance on offer and forcing mistakes from the Indian batters. The comprehensive nature of the win reflected Pakistan's balanced squad and strategic clarity during the tournament.

Satwik-Chirag win bronze at BWF world tour finals 2025

India's top men's doubles pair clinched bronze at the BWF World Tour Finals, marking a historic achievement

HANGZHOU

Indian badminton stars Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty added another milestone to Indian badminton by winning the bronze medal at the BWF World Tour Finals 2025, held in Hangzhou, China, on Sunday night. The achievement marks only the second time Indian shuttlers have won a medal at the prestigious season-ending tournament.

The Indian men's doubles pair bowed out in the semi-finals after a hard-fought three-game encounter against the Chinese duo of Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang. Playing in front of a home crowd, the Chinese pair edged past the Indians with a scoreline of 10-21, 21-17, 21-13 in a match that showcased momentum swings and high-quality rallies.

Satwik and Chirag started the match strongly, dominating the opening game with aggressive attacking play and sharp net exchanges to take it 21-10. However, the Chinese pair regrouped in the second game, using defensive solidity and improved court coverage to clinch it 21-17. In the decider, Liang and Wang maintained control, capitalising on crucial points to close out the match 21-13 and book their place in the final.

Despite the semi-final loss, the Indian pair were awarded the bronze medal, a significant accomplishment given the elite field featuring the world's top eight pairs. The result further cements Satwik and Chirag's status as one of the strongest men's doubles combinations in world badminton and highlights their consistency at the highest level.

This bronze medal is only the second-ever medal won by Indian shuttlers at the BWF World Tour Finals. The first came in 2018, when P. V. Sindhu scripted history by winning the women's singles title, becoming India's only gold medallist at the tournament to date.

Badminton experts and fans across the country have praised Satwik and Chirag for their achievement, noting that success at the World Tour Finals reflects sustained excellence throughout the season rather than performance in a single event. The pair's bronze is expected to inspire India's next generation of doubles players and strengthen the country's presence in global badminton.

Schaper seals stunning Mauritius open playoff win

Jayden Schaper capped a sensational season by holing a playoff eagle to win the AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open

DUBAI

South African golfer Jayden Schaper delivered one of the defining moments of his young career on Sunday, producing a moment of brilliance to win the AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open at La Réserve Golf Links. Facing American Ryan Gerard in a tense playoff, the 24-year-old chipped in for eagle with his final shot of the tournament, a strike that instantly sealed victory and sent spectators into raptures.

The dramatic finish capped Schaper's second consecutive triumph on both the Sunshine Tour and the DP World Tour, following his playoff success at the Alfred Dunhill Championship just a week earlier. Winning back-to-back titles in such fashion underlined not only his composure under pressure but also his rapid rise among golf's emerging talents.

Reflecting on the decisive moment, Schaper described the shot as something out of a childhood dream. Those are the shots you're dreaming about when you're on the practice green as a youngster, he said. To pull it off in a tournament and in a playoff – I don't know. I just can't wait to get back and look at the footage of that shot because you're in the moment and focused and you don't really take in what just happened. I'm pretty sure it's going to hit me later, but it's just so insane.

The Mauritius Open victory was the latest highlight in an extraordinary three-week stretch for Schaper.

S.Korea's Se-young wins World Tour finals

ADIDAS ARENA

South Korea's An Se-young won the World Tour Finals with a 21-13 18-21 21-10 win over defending champion Wang Zhiyi on Sunday for her 11th title in 2025, equalling Japan great Kento Momota's record of most titles in a calendar year in singles competition.

An, the 2024 Paris Olympics champion, engaged in a marathon contest of 96 minutes against Wang, with both players using their speed to get early points. The Chinese player targeted her opponent's forehand and stretched out rallies to tire her out.

But An put Wang under severe pressure by using sharp shot placements and stable defence to take advantage, before mixing up smashes to take a one-game lead.

Wang caught An out of position in the second game to show signs of revival. Tiredness in a contest of long rallies meant unforced errors crept in for the South Korean and her Chinese opponent pushed the game to a decider.

Tremendous defence from An on the back court allowed her to cover a lot of ground in the final game despite suffering leg cramps as she again employed smashes to trouble Wang and claim her second title at the season finale.

There was more disappointment for China in the men's singles final as home favourite and world No. 1 Shi Yuqi lost 21-19-21-9 to Christo Popov – the world No. 8 becoming France's first-ever World Tour winner.

Texas Tech stuns no. 3 Duke at MSG

NEW YORK

Every number on the scoreboard and every line on the stat sheet indicated No. 19 Texas Tech was in serious trouble. LeJuan Watts had already fouled out, JT Toppin was one whistle away and the Red Raiders were trying to climb all the way out of a 17-point hole against undefeated Duke, the third-ranked team in the country.

But those roadblocks hardly fazed Christian Anderson and his determined teammates. Anderson scored 23 of his 27 points in the second half, including the tiebreaking free throw with 3.4 seconds left, and Texas Tech stormed back for an impressive 82-81 victory before a sellout crowd at Madison Square Garden.

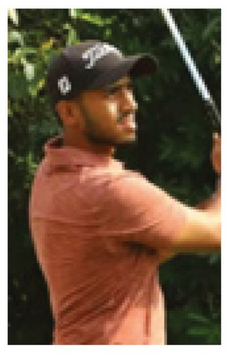
We were so competitive. In that moment all we wanted to do was win, said Anderson, who played all 40 minutes. We had some guys foul out. We had some substitution problems just because we had so many fouls and it was a short bench, but we just had a level of fight that was able to win the game.

The victory was Texas Tech's first over a top-five foe since defeating No. 1 Baylor 65-62 in January 2022. It also snapped a six-game losing streak versus ranked teams that included close losses this season to Illinois and Arkansas, along with a 30-point defeat against Purdue.

Bhattacharya Secures Asian Tour Card with Runner-Up Finish at Q-School

HUA HIN

India's 22-year-old golfer Shaurya Bhattacharya delivered a calm and mature performance to finish second at the Final Stage of the Asian Tour Qualifying School, earning full playing rights for the 2026 season. Bhattacharya began the final round with a narrow one-shot lead and stayed in strong contention throughout the day. However, a late setback saw him drop bogeys on three of the last seven holes, which slowed his push for the title. He signed off with a final-round 72, just one stroke behind China's Lin Yuxin, who produced a superb 67 to win at 16-under-par. Bhattacharya finished an impressive 15-under after five rounds at the Lake View Resort & Golf Club, missing a chance to force a playoff when he bogeyed the par-four 18th hole.



Despite narrowly missing the title, the runner-up finish marked a major milestone in Bhattacharya's career by securing full Asian Tour status. Indian golf enjoyed further success as Rashid Khan finished tied-15th, Ajeetesh Sandhu tied-19th, and Shubham Jaglan claimed the final card after a dramatic five-hole playoff, highlighting India's strong showing at the event.

Philadelphia Eagles overcame mistakes to defeat Washington Commanders, clinching a second straight NFC East crown dramatically

Eagles clinch back-to-back NFC East title

MARYLAND

The Philadelphia Eagles sealed their second consecutive NFC East title with a 29–18 victory over the Washington Commanders, a result achieved through resilience rather than polish. As the celebratory notes of Sir Duke filled the locker room, head coach Nick Sirianni made his rounds, greeting players in a black T-shirt emblazoned with the words, Been there, won that. The moment marked a rare accomplishment for the franchise—back-to-back division titles not seen in two decades.

This gets better and better each time, said running back Saquon Barkley, reflecting the satisfaction of another hard-earned crown. The game itself, however, was anything but smooth. Philadelphia stumbled early with a fumble on the opening kickoff, struggled with penalties on its signature tush push, and left points on the field with three field-goal attempts sailing wide left. At halftime, the reigning Super Bowl champions even trailed, raising questions about their execution.

Those concerns eased as the Eagles settled in behind quarterback Jalen Hurts, who delivered one of his most efficient performances of the season. Working under center more frequently, Hurts completed 22 of 30 passes for 185 yards and two touchdowns without committing a turnover. His calm presence steadied the offense and allowed Philadelphia to methodically take control.

Hurts leaned heavily on his top targets, with A. J. Brown and DeVonta Smith combining for 15 receptions. Smith hauled in a 5-yard touchdown in the first half, while tight end Dallas Goedert caught a pivotal 15-yard scoring pass in the third quarter. That touchdown capped a grueling 17-play, 83-yard drive that chewed up more than ten minutes of clock and swung momentum firmly toward Philadelphia.

Shane Watson Hails Cameron Green's KKR Move

NEW DELHI

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) assistant coach Shane Watson has described Australia seam-bowling all-rounder Cameron Green as a "world-class cricketer" who will continue to improve with time. Green was the headline signing at the IPL 2026 auction in Abu Dhabi, where KKR secured him for a record Rs 25.20 crore, making him the most expensive overseas player in IPL history and the third costliest overall.

Watson said he has long admired Green's all-round abilities and is excited about the opportunity to work closely with him at KKR. Calling himself an all-rounder at heart, Watson praised Green's batting technique, power-hitting ability, and bowling skills, highlighting his height, bounce, and versatility. He noted that Green can bat anywhere from the top three to the lower middle order, adding immense balance to the side. Watson also said the KKR environment would help Green further develop as a T20 all-rounder, especially with mentors like Dwayne Bravo and Andre Russell in the setup. Emphasising Green's team-first attitude and professionalism, Watson said these qualities explained the intense bidding war involving KKR and Chennai Super Kings.

ARSENAL RECLAIM SUMMIT

Arsenal returns to Premier League summit

ARSENAL

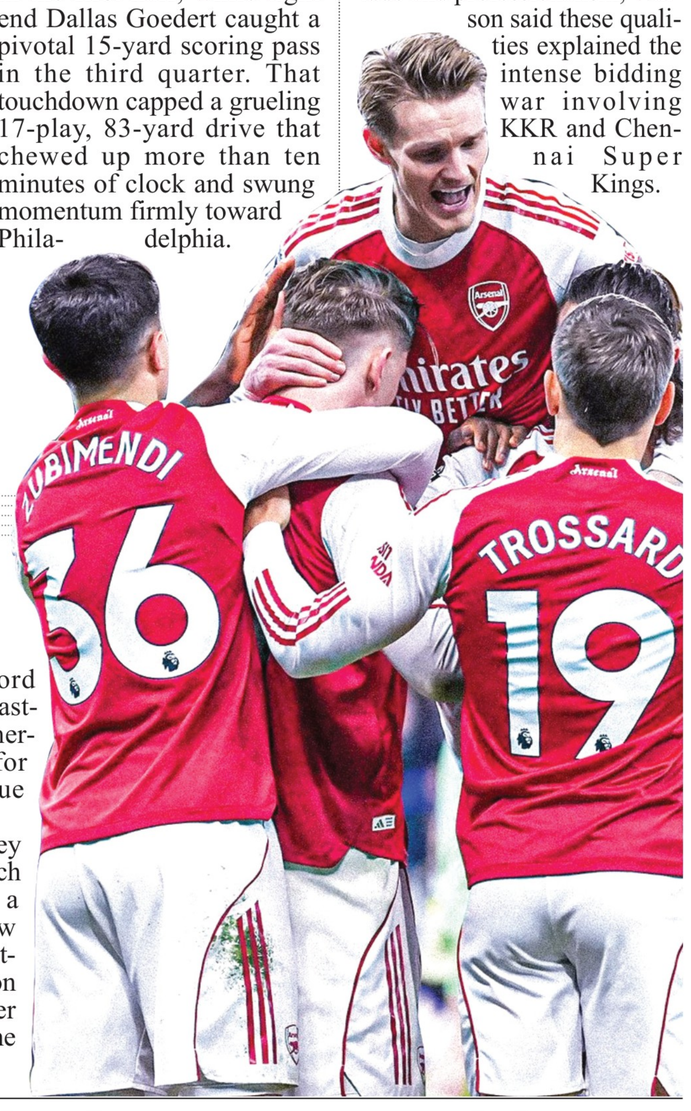
Arsenal surged back to the top of the Premier League table with a hard-fought 1–0 victory over Everton, capitalising on a weekend filled with twists across the division. The result allowed the Arsenal to leapfrog Manchester City, whose earlier win briefly placed them at the summit.

City had moved ahead with a commanding 3–0 victory over West Ham United, climbing to 37 points and applying pressure on Arsenal ahead of their late kick-off. However, that advantage lasted only a few hours. Arsenal striker Viktor Gyökeres proved decisive at Goodison Park, converting a penalty midway through the first half after Everton defender Jake O'Brien was penalised for a handball from a corner. The composed finish was enough to seal all three points and move Arsenal to 39 points, restoring their place at the summit. Everton, meanwhile, slipped to 10th with 24 points.

Elsewhere, Arsenal's London rivals Chelsea showed resilience by fighting back from two goals down to secure a 2–2 draw against Newcastle United. Newcastle appeared on course for victory after establishing a commanding lead, but Chelsea's late surge ensured a share of the spoils, denying the Magpies a crucial win.

Champions Liverpool climbed to fifth place with a dramatic 2–1 win over nine-man Tottenham Hotspur. The match was overshadowed by an injury to Liverpool's British-record signing Alexander Isak, casting a shadow over an otherwise important victory for the Reds as they continue their push up the table.

At the other end, Burnley finally halted a seven-match losing run by snatching a late equaliser in a 1–1 draw away to Bournemouth. Bottom-placed Wolverhampton Wanderers endured further misery, falling 2–0 at home to Brentford.



PRATIKA RAWAL SAYS RECOVERY ON TRACK AFTER INJURY

Injured Indian batter Pratika Rawal says recovery is progressing well after missing Women's World Cup knockouts due injury

NEW DELHI

Indian cricketer Pratika Rawal has shared a positive update on her recovery, expressing gratitude for the support she has received following an injury that ruled her out of the latter stages of the Women's World Cup. The 24-year-old said she is recovering well and hopes to return to the field soon.

Rawal sustained injuries to her right ankle and knee during India's washed-out league-stage match against Bangladesh at the D. Y. Patil Stadium in October. As a result of the injury, she was forced to miss the tournament's knockout matches, a significant setback given her form during the competition.

Just wanted to take a moment to thank everyone for the overwhelming good wishes over the last few days. I'm recovering well, grateful for the fantastic medical support, and looking forward to being back on the field soon, Rawal wrote on X, acknowledging messages from fans and well-wishers across the country.

Before her injury, Rawal had been one of India's standout performers in the tournament. She finished as the team's second-highest run-scorer with 308 runs, highlighted by a magnificent century and a crucial half-century, playing a key role in India's journey to the final.

Although sidelined, Rawal remained closely involved with the team and was visibly emotional as she watched India clinch the World Cup title with a commanding 52-run victory over South Africa in the final on November 2. Celebrating from the sidelines in a wheelchair, she described the moment as surreal and deeply meaningful.

I can't even express it. There are no words. This flag on my shoulder means so much, Rawal said, reflecting on the triumph. She added that while injuries are part of the game, being present with the squad during the historic win made her feel proud and fulfilled.

Rawal also noted the emotional intensity of watching from the outside, saying it was harder to sit through every wicket and boundary than to play. Her heartfelt reaction resonated with fans, symbolising the unity and resilience of a team that delivered India a long-awaited World Cup title.

'Fit India Sundays on Cycle' marks first anniversary

PUDUCHERRY

Fit India's Sundays on Cycle initiative completed one year, drawing massive participation and nationwide enthusiasm for fitness

Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya marked the first anniversary of the Fit India Sundays on Cycle initiative by highlighting its unprecedented reach and impact across the country. Sharing a brief update on X on Sunday morning, Mandaviya wrote, Over 2 lakh locations, more than 20 lakh people. One Mission – Fit India. Celebrating 1 year of #SundaysOnCycle, summarising a year-long journey that has turned cycling into a nationwide fitness movement.

The landmark anniversary was celebrated in Puducherry, where more than 1,500 cyclists from diverse backgrounds came together at the scenic Rock Beach. Participants included school students, members of NaMo Cycling Clubs, and students from Puducherry University, transforming the coastal stretch into a vibrant and energetic fitness festival. The event underscored the growing national importance of cycling as a sustainable, inclusive, and accessible form of exercise.

Adding star power and inspiration to the occasion, Padma Bhushan and Khel Ratna awardees P R Sreejesh and Sharath Kamal joined the youth for the cycling ride. Their presence motivated participants to embrace sports, discipline, and an active lifestyle, reinforcing the Fit India message at the grassroots level.

The anniversary celebration went beyond cycling, featuring a wide range of fun and traditional fitness activities such as Zumba, carrom, chess, mallakhamb, silambam, yoga, and rope skipping. Coinciding with World Meditation Day on December 21, organisers emphasised the theme that Fitness is Meditation in Motion, blending physical activity with mental well-being.

The Sunday morning gathering also saw the participation of key dignitaries, including Lieutenant Governor K. Kailashnathan, Chief Minister N. Rangasamy, Legislative Assembly Speaker R. Selvam, and Home Minister A. Namassivayam, alongside senior officials and citizens.

Notably, Mandaviya had inaugurated the very first Sundays on Cycle event in New Delhi a year ago. Since then, the initiative has evolved into a mass movement, encouraging citizens across India to adopt cycling as a simple yet powerful step toward a fitter and healthier nation.

India batter Jemimah Rodrigues said World Cup success brings greater responsibility as India prepare for Sri Lanka T20Is

Rodrigues says WC Glory raises expectations ahead of SL T20I series

NEW DELHI

India batter Jemimah Rodrigues believes the historic Women's World Cup triumph has ushered in a new phase of responsibility for the team as they prepare for a five-match T20I series against Sri Lanka, beginning on Sunday. The upcoming series marks India's first international assignment since lifting the World Cup last month.

Reflecting on the aftermath of the title-winning campaign, Jemimah said the impact of the victory has already extended far beyond the boundary ropes. Speaking in a video shared by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), she noted a visible shift in public perception and recognition of women's cricket. Life has definitely changed after the World Cup. A lot many people have been recognising women's cricket, and I think that is one of the biggest achievements that this World Cup has had, she said.

Jemimah echoed the sentiments earlier expressed by India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana, emphasising the long-term significance of the triumph. She recalled Mandhana's view that the full impact of the World Cup win may not be immediately apparent but would resonate for generations. According to Jemimah, the success has the potential to inspire young girls across the country and elevate the stature of women's cricket in India for years to come.

Despite the celebrations, the 25-year-old stressed that the team has already shifted focus to future challenges. She said the World Cup victory is only the beginning of a larger journey. Yes, we take pride in what we've done as a team, but it's just the beginning. Now is the time when I think the responsibility is more because the expectations are going to be more, she explained.

East Bengal FC win inaugural SAFF Women's Club championship

KOLKATA

East Bengal FC created history by clinching the title of the inaugural SAFF Women's Club Championship 2025 after a convincing 3-0 victory over hosts APF in the final at Dasrath Stadium in Kathmandu on Sunday. With this triumph, East Bengal became the first Indian women's club to win an international football tournament, marking a landmark moment for women's football in the country.

The Kolkata-based side delivered a composed and authoritative performance in the final, dominating proceedings from the opening whistle against a competitive Armed Police Forces (APF) team backed by a passionate home crowd. East Bengal's attacking intent, disciplined defence, and tactical organisation proved too strong for the Nepali champions, who struggled to cope with the Indian club's pace and movement.

East Bengal took control early in the match, applying sustained pressure that resulted in the opening goal and set the tone for the contest. As the game progressed, the Indian champions continued to dictate play, adding two more goals to seal the contest decisively and remove any doubt about the outcome. The clean sheet further underlined East Bengal's all-round dominance in the title clash.

The victory carries immense significance not only for the club but also for Indian women's football as a whole. The SAFF Women's Club Championship, introduced to provide greater international exposure and competitive opportunities for women's clubs in South Asia, saw teams from across the region competing for continental pride.

We thought we would be competitive, says McCullum

ADELAIDE

England head coach Brendon McCullum accepted that the team's preparation for the Ashes series was not right and is prepared for the following scrutiny ahead after the visitors were handed an 82-run defeat at Adelaide Oval. After defeats in Perth and Brisbane, this was a third straight loss for the visitors as Australia took an unassailable 3-0 lead and retained the Ashes title.

Acknowledging that their opponents had outplayed them in all aspects, McCullum didn't shy away from recognising that his team's entire performance was the most precise, formidable, and consistent he had witnessed from an Australian side in many years.

We're obviously disappointed, McCullum said. We came here with high hopes, high ambitions and lofty goals, and we've been outplayed across three Test matches. You've got to cop a sweep when you don't quite achieve what you're hoping to. I do feel like the last day-and-a-half, two days, we've probably played our best cricket, and that's because we've just played.

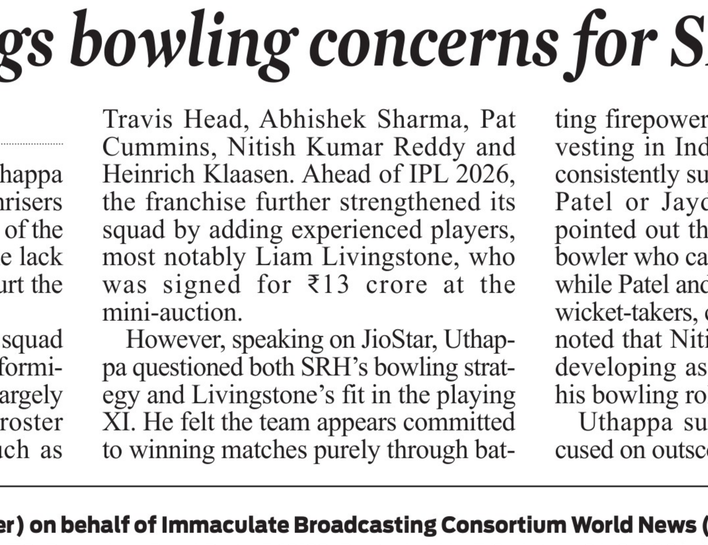
Shubman Gill's T20 WC sacking: Report reveals 'real reason'

NEW DELHI

India's T20I vice-captain, Shubman Gill, incurred a huge shock on Saturday as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the 15-member squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup 2026. Gill's omission left many surprised, considering he was recently elevated as the deputy to Suryakumar Yadav while also being given the opening spot alongside Abhishek Sharma. However, the Ajit Agarkar-led selection committee hit the panic button after witnessing Gill's poor run of form in the format and decided to reallocate the second opening spot to Sanju Samson. While questions were being raised over Gill's continuity in the playing XI, ahead of Samson, not many had predicted that he would be dropped from the squad entirely. As per a report in the Indian Express, Gill wasn't informed about his removal from the T20 squad until the roster was announced on Saturday. But the BCCI selection committee had made up its mind a few days ago.

25K Kolkata: Gulveer, Seema rewrite records

KOLKATA



While Uganda's Joshua Cheptegei underlined his mastery of the distance in the international elite men's race, the day truly belonged to India's Gulveer Singh and Seema, both of whom rewrote the course records in their respective elite categories at the World 25K marathon, here on Sunday.

Cheptegei, the double Olympic champion, stamped his authority early, dictating the pace from the flag-off and never relinquishing control. He crossed the line in 1:11:49 to win his maiden title, finishing ahead of Tanzania's Alphonce Felix Siumbu (1:11:56) and Lesotho's Tebello Ramakongoana (1:11:59) in a tightly contested podium finish. Though he fell short of the course record of 1:11:13 set by Daniel Simiu Ebenyo in 2023, Cheptegei's composed and commanding run reaffirmed his stranglehold over the event.

For a major part of the race, the trio kept in a close pack with nothing separating them at the 15 km or 20 km mark. But Joshua, at par with others at 01:00:49 at the 21.1 km half-marathon distance, pulled away the last four kilometres to leave his stamp on the course.

Joshua Cheptegei said, Winning mattered more than the record for me. Coming back to Kolkata and winning is special for me. I have won in Bangalore, and this was a big race with world-class athletes. This victory gives me confidence and positivity as I prepare for my next marathon.

In the international elite women's race, Ethiopia's Degitu Azimeraw produced a clinical performance to dethrone defending champion Sutume Asefa Kebede. Running the Kolkata course for the third time, Azimeraw, the winner here in 2017 and a fourth-placer a year later, broke away decisively and led from start to finish, clocking 1:19:36. Sutume settled for second in 1:20:28, while Meselech Alemayehu completed an Ethiopian clean sweep in 1:20:48.

SRH BOWLING CONCERNS

Uthappa flags bowling concerns for SRH ahead of IPL

NEW DELHI

Former India cricketer Robin Uthappa has expressed concerns over Sunrisers Hyderabad's bowling depth ahead of the IPL 2026 season, warning that the lack of young Indian bowlers could hurt the franchise in the long run.

SRH retained the core of their squad after assembling one of the most formidable line-ups in IPL 2025, built largely around explosive batting. The roster boasts power-packed names such as Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma, Pat Cummins, Nitish Kumar Reddy and Heinrich Klaasen. Ahead of IPL 2026, the franchise further strengthened its squad by adding experienced players, most notably Liam Livingstone, who was signed for ₹13 crore at the mini-auction.

However, speaking on JioStar, Uthappa questioned both SRH's bowling strategy and Livingstone's fit in the playing XI. He felt the team appears committed to winning matches purely through batting firepower, without adequately investing in Indian bowlers who could consistently support Cummins, Harshal Patel or Jaydev Unadkat. Uthappa pointed out that Cummins is the only bowler who can reliably control an end, while Patel and Unadkat, though proven wicket-takers, can be expensive. He also noted that Nitish Kumar Reddy is still developing as an all-rounder, making his bowling role uncertain.

Uthappa suggested SRH seem focused on outscoring opponents by pushing totals beyond 300 rather than building a balanced attack. Former India captain Anil Kumble echoed similar views, calling Livingstone a T20 match-winner but questioning the ₹13 crore investment given limited overseas slots and a thin bowling unit.

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